

The regular meeting of the East Amwell Township Committee was called to order at 7:36 p.m. Present were Mayor Peter Kneski, Deputy Mayor Linda F. Lenox, and Committee members Patricia Cregar and Timothy Martin. Committee member Larry Tatsch was absent. Township Administrator Timothy Matheny and Treasurer/CFO Jane Luhrs were also in attendance.

In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Municipal Clerk Teresa R. Stahl announced that this is a special meeting. Notice of the meeting was published in the Hunterdon County Democrat issue of March 25, 2010. A copy of the agenda for this meeting was forwarded to the Hunterdon County Democrat, Times of Trenton, Star Ledger, Courier News, posted on the bulletin board, and filed in the Clerk's Office on March 26, 2010. The purpose of this meeting is to have a discussion about administration and enforcement of the Uniform Construction Code and to consider the introduction of an ordinance to transfer administration and enforcement to the State of New Jersey. Continued discussion on the 2010 budget will also take place. The public is invited to attend and comment. Action will be taken.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

AGENDA REVIEW

Mayor Kneski said that discussion with the Planning Board regarding submission of an ANJEC matching grant for the Amwell Valley Agricultural District Design Guidance Ordinance would be the first item on the agenda.

ANJEC GRANT APPLICATION Don Reilly, Chairman of the Planning Board, was present for this discussion, and Mr. Martin arrived during this discussion.

Mr. Reilly explained that two weeks ago, it was discovered that the Township might qualify for a grant to offset funds in the Planning Board budget for this project. Mr. Reilly subsequently had a discussion with the Treasurer, who explained that funding would have to be taken out of the Planning Board budget and put into a matching funds budget. If the grant is not received, the Planning Board budget cannot be reimbursed, and they would lose their funding ability to work on projects. Mr. Reilly commented on the budget process, on the fact that the grant application deadline is April 1, and on the fact that they were looking for a mechanism to fund the work with grant money. The requested amount was \$4,750.

Mayor Kneski appreciated the efforts to secure the grant, but he spoke about the tight budget and constraints in place with reduced CMPTRA aid and the levy cap. The budget has been reviewed in depth, and finding an additional \$4,000 was difficult. Further comments were made, including the fact that there was no guarantee of the success of the grant application; Mr. Reilly had hoped that there would be enough funding for the Planning Board budget and the matching grant line item, which would benefit the Township if the grant was received; the Planning Board has a budget of \$36,000, which was cut from their original requests, among other items.

Mr. Reilly concluded by stating that he would notify the Planner that the Township would not be applying for the matching grant.

DISCUSSION ON ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF THE UNIFORM CONSTRUCTION CODE AND CONSIDERATION OF AN ORDINANCE TO TRANSFER ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT TO THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Mayor Kneski asked Mr. Matheny for background information on the topic, and Mr. Matheny stated that his PowerPoint presentation would provide the framework for discussions. He explained that at issue is cost and how to do business in the Construction Office. He noted that the Township does provide good service, but looking at numbers and shortfalls over the past several years, there is a concern. Mrs. Luhrs noted that losses occurred in the last six years.

Mr. Matheny presented the slides, with the following highlights: Long term goals are to provide construction services to the residents and a high quality service in the most cost effective method and to maintain or improve the quality and quantity of construction services. Consideration should be given to a process that provides permits and inspections in a timely manner and any

change should be made without inconvenience. The current system will be used as a litmus test for comparison to any proposed change, and the change must provide advantages and/or savings over the current system. A comparison of the current system versus administration by the NJ Department of Community Affairs (DCA) was offered.

In general, permit and inspection fees should cover operating costs of the department; shortfalls between fees and expenditures become an operating expense expenditure in the budget and shortfalls are made up by the taxpayers. Surpluses are set aside to offset shortfall years. The number of permits is one way to gauge the workload of the department, and the volume of work slide showed permit activity from 2000 – 2010 with decreased numbers in permits; the decrease from 2008 to 2009 was justification for reducing secretarial hours in 2009. Higher volume years were attributed to larger development, including The Ridge. Expenses for 2009 were highlighted, with salaries at \$70,300, social security at \$5,378, health insurance at \$6,505, and other expenses at \$3,650; total expenditures was \$96,133 for salaries and wages, and revenues were \$54,000. Expenses for that year would have been higher; however, an employee left mid-year and was not replaced.

Revenues versus expenses were shown from 1990 through 2009; over that course of time there was a \$120,761 deficit. Records show that there has been a consistent deficit in the past six years. In 2009, the secretary's hours were reduced from 17.5 to 15 hours per week, the secretary left mid-year and was not replaced, the construction officials received 10% less pay, and fees were increased; there was still a deficit of \$30,840 between revenues and expenses.

A shared service agreement was investigated with a neighboring town. Pros included similar quality and service and cons included a four-year contract period by law (although there may be options to break it), a set cost based on their overhead (not permit fee based), and the unknown cost in future years. A shared service could still be an alternative.

DCA is another alternative investigated. Pros include the fact that it is totally fee based with no additional cost to the town and no revenues to the town. Representatives man their office from Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., and they have a full time professional staff. All functions are handled directly by their Central Office, including fee collection and financial oversight. The potential would be a \$35,000 savings to the township. Cons include the fact that there would be no evening hours, central office is at an inconvenient location at 171 Route 137, Suite 101, Asbury, NJ, and current employees will be displaced. Discussions with DCA personnel indicated that inspections called in between 8 -9 a.m. will be done that day, and after those hours, they will be done the next day. Permits submitted at East Amwell are picked up within one day, and daytime office hours will be provided to the East Amwell municipal building once per week for approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. Additional time or another day can be added if necessary. Hunterdon County municipalities, such as Bethlehem Township, Bloomsbury Township, Frenchtown Borough, Glen Gardner Borough, Hampton Borough, Holland Township, Milford Borough, and Union Township, use DCA. A comment from the public was made that Frenchtown was pulling out, and Mr. Matheny noted the reason was that they were going with a shared service with the City of Lambertville.

A cost analysis concluded that having a municipal construction department runs a deficit of approximately \$35,000-45,000 per year. A shared service would cost between \$5,000-20,000. Using DCA would be at no cost.

Advantages and considerations include the zero cost for service, no budgetary exposure with access to the functions of an in-house construction department, and if the future brought considerably more construction, the municipality, at any time, can resurrect an in-house construction department with the appropriate ordinance in place. DCA provided a sample ordinance to repeal the existing Uniform Construction Code Ordinance, Chapter 66, sections 1 and 2. The ordinance would relinquish jurisdiction to the DCA to enforce the Uniform Construction Code and "shall not take effect for 120 days or until the DCA shall exercise its jurisdiction to enforce, whichever is sooner." DCA has historically been in place in municipalities two weeks after the final adoption of an ordinance. A potential time line was provided: Introduction, 3/29/10; Additional Discussion for Information, 4/8/10; Public Comment and Adoption, 4/15/10; Publication, 4/22/10.

Additional steps included a meeting with DCA representatives, which took place today with appropriate staff members to discuss operations, solidify expectations, discuss pros and cons, and to assure that expectations are accurate and understood. Implementation would include the assignment of a construction liaison to coordinate construction activities in the Township, to cross train some personnel to assist, and the addition of an extra half hour work for the liaison. Start up involves the DCA taking over all open permits at no additional cost, with the fees already assessed to the Township. The potential start date would be June 1, but could start as soon as May 1, 2010.

Mr. Matheny concluded by asking for questions. Mayor Kneski asked about evening hours at the municipal building. Mr. Matheny said that the Zoning Officer would still be here and people can drop off permits. The Clerk asked for clarification for the record, i.e., people will be able to drop off permits when municipal staff are present on Tuesday night; however, i.e., the construction liaison will not necessarily be in the office. Mr. Matheny also noted that permits could be mailed, and DCA will drop permits in the mail.

Motion by Mr. Martin, seconded by Deputy Mayor Lenox, and it was carried unanimously to open to the public.

Frances Gavigan, 123 Wertsville Road, asked how long Stewart Doddy was employed in East Amwell; Mrs. Cregar answered since 1988. She commented on Mr. Doddy's retirement, stating that he was receiving something other than a gold watch for his efforts. She was not in favor of changing to the DCA, commenting on the following: the length of time to drive to Washington to secure permits and assistance; East Amwell being different than other municipalities; East Amwell's 20 years of supporting zoning and legislation to discourage construction and success in achieving deficits in the construction office; economic conditions which discourage construction; obscene and rude behavior by outsourcing fix or six people and small percentage of money out of the entire budget to cover the department; suggestion to combine boards rather than having separate secretaries and professionals for boards, including combining the zoning and planning boards. On a question from Ms. Gavigan about professional costs for the Planning and Zoning Boards, Mrs. Luhrs explained that in 2009 the Planning Board spent \$16,000 for all professionals and the Board of Adjustment spent \$4,300.

Ms. Gavigan continued, with the following highlights mentioned: a suggestion to reactivate the Friends of Clawson Park rather than spending \$35,000 for mowing at the park; "the subtle East Amwell characteristics" and the feeling that DCA would not be as accommodating; the obscene and rude manner in which this is being handled, including a public hearing on April 15 (tax day), advertising of meeting, and "not being what the public wants"; a suggestion to look at shared services with Raritan or Hopewell or something within 10 miles driving area; her feelings of contempt for this proposal and a comparison to County level activities; the wish that the municipality find money elsewhere to cover "the value brought to the town ... [which is] worth the price"; list of things she does not get from the township while paying taxes. She concluded that it was a "dumb idea" to outsource, that the Township Committee should find another way to keep existing service, and it was wrong and ill-mannered to consider the option of switching to the DCA so quickly. She supported Mr. Matheny, but she supported Mr. Doddy more.

Ilona English, 9 Runyon Mill Road, believed that working with DCA would be horrible and did not believe service would be better than it is now. She spoke about the need for continuity and questioned the statement about having the construction department pay for itself. She felt that there is "an excellent system" in place, the construction officials explain things and give guidance, and they make sure that people get permits and educate the public. She felt that a stranger to East Amwell from another part of the state would not provide such service. She commented on Mr. Matheny's abstract analysis of costs without issues. She reiterated that the State would not be familiar with East Amwell properties and building permits, DCA would not know local contractors, the permit process and commute to the DCA building would be a burden, and it was wrong to look at the issue as black and white.

Ms. English mentioned the diplomatic way Mr. Doddy handles jobs without permits, while educating the public. She cautioned that using the DCA would result in illegal construction with residents building without obtaining permits. She also was concerned with the "time crunch" to go to the DCA and asked if this was looked into last year. Ms. English commented on having an ordinance on the agenda and asked when the topic was previously discussed. She commented on human decency, on not being nice, and on being embarrassed by the matter.

Mayor Kneski said that nothing was in concrete, only in discussion stage as the governing body reviewed the budget. Ms. English commented on the possible time line in the slide presentation, stating that she would be contacting people by phone and by computer, and she does not want to see the DCA involved. She suggested having a fundraiser to earn the \$35,000, or eliminate the Administrator position, noting that previous Township Committee members handled these responsibilities. She objected to a public hearing on an ordinance on April 15. She concluded that what was being proposed was wrong for Mr. Doddy and the other inspectors; she asked that the money be found elsewhere to allow people to hang onto their jobs; she said that people do not want to drive up north for permits, and she reminded the governing body that the people are the Township, not the governing body.

Bob Rowe, 33 Toad Lane, has had many years of experience as a contractor, and he provided information on the permit process, which may include multiple trips to the construction office by the contractor and the property owner (e.g., to deliver drawings which DCA may require from architects while local officials will accept hand drawn designs, to drop off forms, to pay for fees, etc.) Mr. Rowe stated that DCA fees are never consistent and in some instances are higher than local fees. He did not believe the Township needed more state government. Mr. Rowe asked about the expense column for construction, and it was noted that the fees for salaries and benefits were going up. He mentioned that some inspectors have multiple licenses, and he suggested that having one inspector do all inspections was an option. He believed that it was important to have personal inspections by the same inspector, noting good service by Mr. Doddy and Mr. Buchanan; he felt that personal service was more important for this community and a reduced number of inspectors would be "nice for the budget."

Barbara Sageser, 15 Welisewitz Road, stated that she has been an architect for some time, and her husband is also an architect and planner. She has experience with the code and being in the field, noting that the change from the BOCA code to the International Code requires professionals to be constantly aware of amendments. Additionally, NJ has its own code for construction. Mrs. Sageser said that the whole code should be read in context and commented on the need to have good solid code coordination and understanding of the relationship by one person. She further commented on volume increases, which will be coming after the bad economic period we have been in and the potential for increased building on the horizon, and the fact that bureaucracy, like time, is money. She felt that it was a disservice to go with a faceless department who will not understand the town and leave when they go out. She also mentioned the temptation of residents, including farmers, to circumvent the code and build without permits and the potential for neighbors to turn on neighbors and involve the DCA. She concluded that having the local construction department was good for the Township and urged the governing body not having service leave the township.

Lora Olsen, Village of Ringoes, asked if DCA would take all the construction files for the township. Mr. Matheny explained that they would hold permits, including outstanding ones for about three years and return them after that. The Tax Assessor will have copies of all permits issued by DCA. Mr. Matheny also noted that staff would be here to be able to research files, if necessary.

Andrea Bonette, 17 Ridge Road, asked if inspections called in between 8 and 9 a.m. would be done that day. Having built two houses in East Amwell, she was familiar with three building inspectors and commented that Mr. Doddy did a great job. She asked how fast inspections would take place. Mr. Rowe, from the audience, stated about 3 or 4 days and would not be as quick as they say, adding that occasionally they would do them in a day. Mr. Rowe said that it would also take about 4 or 5 trips to the their office for permits, and he mentioned that a trade association he belongs to indicates that the DCA wants to take over all inspections in the state.

Mr. Matheny said that the DCA has advised him that inspections called in early in the day would be done that day or the next. He was charged to ask the questions, and this is the information he received.

Mrs. Bonette asked if the Township Committee has, as she has asked in the past, looked at all departments to cut costs. She wanted to have a discussion on record about this, including health benefits. She mentioned a paradigm shift from a Township who really wanted to serve the residents, mentioning her assistance to the public while serving on the Township Committee.

Mrs. Bonette asked, in relationship to the Open Public Meetings Act, when was there a previous discussion about a proposed ordinance. It was explained to her that the Township Committee has been discussing contracts in executive session and looking at the department in relationship to the budget; the slide show provided this evening shows that the department has been running at a deficit.

Jay Monroe, 27 Ridge Road, commented on Mr. Doddy, mentioned that he was asked some years ago to count his dogs, although it was not his responsibility to do so as the building inspector. Mr. Doddy took him aside to explain the matter to him, and Mr. Monroe found insight into what type of man Mr. Doddy was, noting that he was very straightforward with him. Mr. Monroe concluded that it was hard to come by a man of such integrity and truthfulness, and Mr. Doddy does his job well too. He stated that he has "names of some people who should get pink slips, not Stew."

Rich Spiegel, 1 Mountain Road, mentioned his experience in working on a building project on Route 1, with respect to the involvement of a construction code official and the potential for tearing down walls because of improper reinforcement. He questioned why Mr. Doddy was not present this evening; he was advised that Mr. Doddy was aware of the meeting. Mr. Spiegel commented on OPRA, state statutes, treasury statutes, and on getting rid of a tenured employee. He stated, "Stew is fantastic on the job."

Mr. Spiegel was familiar with the DCA through conversations with some of his cousins. He mentioned fast tracking the ordinance, and the fact that Mr. Doddy has worked in the township for 22 years, looking ahead to retirement as he did in his job, and what was done "was not the right thing to do."

Mr. Spiegel recommended that the Township save money by contracting with an outside firm to do the DPW work, i.e., no equipment, no employees, no insurance, and no liability. He provided information on his involvement with the municipal building roof repair, which was quoted as a \$250,000 and completed at a cost of \$86,000, including writing the contract and providing drawings. He commented on working with Mr. Doddy with this project.

Tim Mathews, 72 Linvale Road, was familiar with inspections done in Hopewell when he was building a garage. He felt that citizens do not get a lot of tangibles for the high taxes, and they have the expectation of services, either roads or construction, and they do not want the work given to the state. He is a management consultant familiar with the economic times; he believed that they would be turning around very soon. He suggested forming a committee, taking advantage of Mr. Doddy's experience and the experience of some of the residents to see what would work for the township. He concluded by stating that this is a perfect "dollar per drink," i.e., adjusting demand and costs and revenue in a neutral way, suggesting alternative ways to address the problem, such reducing the number of inspectors or charging a little more for inspections. He believed that the economic "bleed out" would be gone in 3 - 6 months.

John Seramba, 111 John Ringo Road, has known Mr. Doddy since 1994, and he is well respected in East Amwell, in Raritan Township, and all throughout the County. He felt that Mr. Doddy is one of the top building inspectors, very well respected and honest, works well with people and with illegal building issues and getting them properly permitted. He spoke about problems he had in Raritan Township when some of the construction officials were ill and DCA stepped in, i.e., cases of inspection time lapses, "with one incident causing a nightmare because of bad weather in the interim."

Mr. Seramba mentioned that like Mr. Monroe, Mr. Doddy acted as a go-between in 2002 with two employees who are no longer here. He is a "calming influence, a good right hand to the Township Committee, gets right to the point, and has no dishonest bone in his body." He suggested cutting Mr. Doddy's hours and salary as well as the other inspectors while the economy is bad. He suggested letting Mr. Doddy retire on his own terms after 22 years, again adding that he helped in Raritan and he is very well respected. He recommended fixing the problem, and he felt that the Township would not get the necessary service from "robots" at DCA.

Bob Rowe, 33 Toad Lane, mentioned that construction officials leave approvals or red stickers with code violations, which are open to interpretation. He noted that the current construction officials get in touch with residents about problems, and this will not happen with DCA. Property owners will have to go back and forth with the state to resolve issues, which will take more time.

Richard Spiegel quoted Winston Churchill, "There are lots of human traits, but dignity and integrity have to be earned." He respected Mr. Doddy.

Iona English raised a Point of Order about having an ordinance introduced at a special meeting. She felt that it was not the proper venue to conduct this business. She also felt that the matter should be tabled and a committee formed to study the matter. She also believed that copies of PowerPoint should have been made available to the public.

Frances Gavigan asked that more copies of budget information be left on the table for the public, commenting on budget figures she was reading. She commented on conversations about going with the DCA, on looking at reduction in costs with shared services, on apologizing to Mr. Doddy, and on not having secretaries for boards.

Motion by Mr. Martin, seconded by Deputy Mayor Lenox, and it was carried unanimously to close to the public.

Mayor Kneski thanked Mr. Matheny for his presentation. In light of the concerns raised by the public and the thought that others may have other concerns, he suggested that the decision be tabled this evening until a review is done and more information the type of service DCA would provide is gathered.

Mr. Martin agreed that there were a lot of good comments and solid questions brought up to explore. He appreciated the concern for the current employee, but it was the Township's responsibility to provide good service and not at an exorbitant cost. He recommended getting more information from others who have used DCA and "sort it out."

Mrs. Cregar has known Mr. Doddy for a long time and finds him to be an ethical man. She has never had to use an inspector for any work on her home.

Mayor Kneski stated that the ordinance would be tabled until further investigation is complete, mentioning the thought of having a subcommittee look at the matter. Looking at alternatives is a good idea, and he appreciated hearing from the public. Mr. Martin commented that even if the department was kept in house at this time, the construction official will be retiring (possibly this year), and a decision will have to be made then. Mr. Martin also noted that having a proposed time line in a presentation is usually provided as a goal to achieve as a possibility.

Mayor Kneski called for a motion to table further discussion on the ordinance. Motion by Mr. Martin, seconded by Deputy Mayor Lenox, and it was carried unanimously. Mayor Kneski felt that there were good comments from the public tonight, and continued discussion will be deferred until the regular Township Committee meeting on April 8.

CONTINUED DISCUSSION ON 2010 BUDGET

Mrs. Luhrs provided handouts, including the 3/29 possible changes sheet, an appropriations summary, the summary levy cap calculation sheet, a capital projects update and the 2010 M&R contracts sheet. She explained that state aid was cut 23% or \$92,569 and the levy cap is still in place. Last year the loss of aid was outside the cap, but this year it is not. Mrs. Luhrs explained the \$92,569 change in the proposed budget she made, including a \$70,000 reduction in the operating budget. The reserve for uncollected taxes was increased to \$9,000 (formula driven), and \$30,000 was taken from surplus, which is "a difficult thing to do." Mrs. Luhrs discussed the budget with Auditor Case, and there is no other place to cut. The proposed changes gets the budget \$214 under the levy cap with an increase in taxes of 1.7%. The state is looking for less than 2.25% increase at this time. She further explained that the operating budget is tight, and every department is lean.

Mrs. Luhrs was asked about the construction department figures in the budget. She explained that last year they took in \$60,701 and she calculated a half-year of salaries through the end of June for a figure of \$30,000. The municipality can only anticipate what they received last year, and salaries and operations were \$66,900 and \$3,800 last year. There is no guarantee that revenues will be at the \$60,000 figure this year, and based on last year's figures, the Township will have to cut another \$10,000 from the proposed budget she prepared.

Mayor Kneski asked about getting more from surplus. Mrs. Luhrs said that it is good practice not to use more than one half of the surplus. It started with \$399,000, \$200,000 was used at first, then \$30,000 more was taken. She stated that it was the governing body's decision; while the tax rate goes down, it perpetuates a problem with a decreased surplus for the future. Mrs. Luhrs said that the proposed budget does not include any raises, and the operating expenses "are bare bones"; the only other option is staff cuts. Some staff hours were recently cut with the staff change for the Board of Health/Deputy Clerk. The 16-18% increase in insurance was also mentioned.

Mrs. Luhrs reiterated that \$10,000 more would be needed in the budget to cover construction expenses. Mr. Martin asked about the possibility of readjusting construction department hours and obtaining an agreement for reduced salary, similar to the 10% reduction last year. Mrs. Luhrs reminded the governing body about the levy cap and the need to keep reduced appropriations.

Mayor Kneski agreed that restructuring the time for the construction department may work and suggesting using part surplus and part salary reduction to address the cap levy. Mr. Matheny and Mrs. Luhrs will review the budget figures, and Mr. Matheny will discuss this option with Mr. Doddy, i.e., the possibility of cutting back hours and providing the service that the community wants.

Further comments were exchanged by the governing body. Mr. Martin noted the concerns raised tonight about the type of service DCA would offer; looking at decreased hours in construction may be prudent to provide the service residents want. He believed that the Township should continue to explore options, including DCA; however, many questions were raised which need to be answered to the Township's satisfaction. Mayor Kneski agreed that valid questions were raised tonight, and Mr. Matheny noted that he received answers directly from DCA and from satisfied municipalities. Mayor Kneski felt that future alternatives must be considered, suggesting a continued look at the DCA and looking at other municipalities for shared services. He also commented on having Mr. Matheny speak with the Construction Official about a cut in salary and reduction of hours.

Mr. Martin asked about metrics tracking of DCA response and performance; Mr. Matheny commented that there are none.

Mayor Kneski commented on trying to make up the \$30,000 deficit in the budget, and Mrs. Luhrs also noted that other changes in the budget, including social security, would have to be adjusted. Mrs. Luhrs explained that even if the Township was able to absorb the loss of 23% of aid this year, if there is another 23% loss next year, the budget would be very lean.

Mrs. Luhrs referred to the capital projects list; there is enough money in the capital fund to cover the Back Brook Road project, which was introduced last month. There is also \$60,000 in the fund for the leveling and sub-grade reconstruction, and there is some urgency in going out to bid to have the DPW begin work. She referenced the 2010 M & R Contracts sheet, showing \$85,400 for total purchase of materials, using funding from Roads Operating, the subgrade reconstruction ordinance, and the Back Brook ordinance. Mrs. Luhrs asked about preparing the ordinance for introduction at the April 8 meeting and holding a special meeting at the end of April to adopt and move forward with the work as quickly as possible. The Engineer and the DPW Superintendent are working on the bid schedule.

Mrs. Luhrs explained that the DPW Superintendent was able to find an F350 pick up on the state bid list at a cost of \$35,000 rather than the originally quoted price of \$65,000. The Township Committee also previously agreed to some equipment purchases, i.e., a power angle plow, a zero turn mower, and a motorized bed edger. Mrs. Luhrs asked about preparing ordinances for these purchases since there is enough funding in the capital account.

There was a consensus that Mrs. Luhrs should prepare all three ordinances for the April 8 meeting. The Clerk will poll the governing body for a date for the special meeting at the end of April.

Further discussion took place on whether the budget could be introduced on April 8; the state asks that budgets be introduced by March 31, after state numbers are received, or by the next regular meeting. Committee members agreed that further information was necessary, and another budget meeting may be necessary or continued discussions would be held at the April 8 meeting. A suggestion was made to target the budget introduction for the special meeting being set for the adoption of the ordinances mentioned above. Mr. Matheny and Mrs. Luhrs will have further information on budget changes discussed tonight by the April 8 meeting.

The Township Committee thanked Mrs. Luhrs and Mr. Matheny for all the information they provided.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Motion by Mrs. Cregar, seconded by Mr. Martin, and it was carried unanimously to open to the public.

Iona English, 9 Runyon Mill Road, suggested that the Planning and Zoning Boards be merged as a cost savings. She also questioned the existence of the Farmland Open Space Preservation Committee when there was an Agricultural Advisory Committee and an Historic Preservation Committee, noting that the Township Committee ultimately makes the decision on the purchase of development rights. She also recommended combining the Board of Health and the Environmental Commission.

Ms. English believed that the Township should consider a solar energy system, and she provided statistics about her financial gains in having a system in place on her property, including energy credits earned and selling back power. She also highly recommended the installation of a wind turbine at Clawson Park. Mayor Kneski advised Ms. English about the energy audit and the solar audit done for the municipal building and the intent to move forward on improvements for cost savings. The solar audit also included East Amwell Township School.

Ms. English believed that the existing municipal building "was garbage" and not healthy; she commented on fixing up a 1950's building. She thought that DPW work should be outsourced rather than buying trucks and suggested an analysis be done of the cost savings.

Ms. English did not believe a business administrator was necessary, questioning why the current Township Committee couldn't do the work as they have done in the past, each Township Committee taking a piece of the responsibility. She commented on the salary and benefits of the Administrator with no set hours; she believed that every employee should "punch in and out."

Ms. English concluded by suggesting not purchasing the truck, purchasing a solar energy system "as money from the sky," and purchasing a wind turbine for Clawson Park.

Rich Spiegel, 1 Mountain Road, commented on having a solar audit by Mike Strizki years ago when federal grants were available. He asked about the state "in lieu of" funding received each year for Green Acres; Mrs. Luhrs said that was the Garden State Reserve, and the amount was \$26,000 this year.

Mr. Spiegel felt that the Township should only buy off the state bid list, and he provided specific information on what could be purchased; Mr. Matheny said that the state bid list is used frequently, but in some instances, they are not the lowest price. Mr. Spiegel commented on saving pennies in every department.

Frances Gavigan, 123 Wertsville Road, provided information on a used F350 1 ton pickup she purchased in New Holland, which was cheaper than the truck that the DPW was considering.

Ms. Gavigan also commented on the following: while she supported Mr. Matheny, she would choose Mr. Doddy over him; she recommended making cuts across the board and combining boards and reducing secretaries; she asked about money spent on professionals, in particular about the engineer being asked to review county bridge plans - she was not in favor of this; County Engineer Glynn advised her that the Township would not be happy with DCA.

Ms. Gavigan asked about specific bills for professionals for applications; Mrs. Luhrs suggested that she provide an OPRA request to the Clerk, and the information would be provided to her through vendor lists Mrs. Luhrs keeps. Ms. Gavigan mentioned specific applicants who had questions about engineering bills, and she suggested that the Township consider competitive bidding for engineers. She also mentioned the importance of having continuity plans for all employees.

Ms. Gavigan also commented on the following: new regulations regarding solar energy systems not being impervious coverage and new legislation for wind turbines and applications which will be forthcoming; the desire to see the Township "thinking outside the box" regarding the budget; she appreciated the DPW for all their work she recently witnessed; an update on the E-163 culvert work on Wertsville Road; details on the Terry Ragolia property on Wertsville Road with site conditions, which would be affected by the road alignment with the proposed [E-174] bridge project and comments on costs for redesign.

Mayor Kneski provided information on his request to have Mr. O'Neal look at the Wertsville Road bridge designs, the offer to find out about pro-bono engineer review of the design, and the fact that Mr. Tatsch is working on this issue.

Tim Mathews, 72 Linvale Road, asked about the status of the traffic enforcement agreement with Raritan Township in terms of expenses and revenues. Mrs. Luhrs said that there was \$10,000 in the budget for 2010, and revenues will go to the court. In 2011, the Township will look at the revenues and anticipate that amount in that year's budget. Mayor Kneski explained that Raritan Township will be providing periodic revenue reports during the year.

Mr. Matheny said that a contract with a caveat for Prosecutor's approval was reviewed and verbally approved by the Prosecutor's Office; a new contract is being prepared. It is on the April 8 agenda, with an implementation date targeted for May 1.

Motion by Mr. Martin, seconded by Deputy Mayor Lenox, and it was carried unanimously to close to the public.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, motion was made by Mrs. Cregar, seconded by Deputy Mayor Lenox, and it was carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:13 p.m.

Teresa R. Stahl, RMC/CMC
Municipal Clerk