

A special meeting of the East Amwell Township Committee was called to order at 6:30 p.m. Present were Mayor David Wang-Iverson, Deputy Mayor Dart Sageser, and Committee members Charles Van Horn and Peter Miller. Township Committee member Tim Mathews was absent. Township Administrator Timothy Matheny was also in attendance.

In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Municipal Clerk Teresa R. Stahl announced that this is a special meeting with a notice published in the Hunterdon County Democrat issue of December 3, 2015. 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 November 24, 2015. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the 2016 budget. The public is invited. Action may or may not be taken.

CFO/Treasurer Margaret Pasqua was also in attendance. She had previously distributed a budget packet to the governing body members.

Ms. Pasqua explained that the budget pages showed what was requested by each department, and it was the Township Committee's responsibility to decide what to provide. The pages showed a salary and wage increase of 2%, which would equate to \$15,000-16,000. She added that FICA would be increasing, and this amount was not shown in the budget.

Ms. Pasqua mentioned that the budget for administration will be where the fine for a late pension enrollment is shown, adding that it was in the amount of \$20,000. She mentioned arguing the point with State Pensions, and she is out of options. The Township's portion of the back payments is \$5,500, which is being paid at the regular meeting, and the employee's portion will be in IROC at the end of the quarter. While there was no due date mentioned for the fine, Ms. Pasqua felt that it was "ridiculous." The Mayor will speak with Mr. Cushing about the matter. Ms. Pasqua spoke about finding funds for the back deductions for the employee, but she was having difficulty finding money for the fine.

Ms. Pasqua mentioned the Open Space budget, adding that there was no increase in the budget, although the salary was increased. Mayor Wang-Iverson asked about getting the Administrator to \$25.00 per hour, which she was promised; Ms. Pasqua mentioned the employee being at the top of the scale, but with an increase in salary, she would make the \$25.00 per hour.

Mr. Miller asked about the spread sheet columns and was told that the year-end balance was what was left in the budget with bills paid through November 30, although there were two more months of back bills for some lines not yet posted.

Ms. Pasqua said that she only heard back from one Township Committee member, the Mayor, that he would not be taking his salary in 2016. There being no comments from other members, the full year's salary will be included in the budget for the remaining Committee members. Ms. Pasqua commented on a tight budget last year with some charges being assessed to the Clerk's line for payment.

Ms. Pasqua urged the governing body to look at the budget for places to cut, stating that it would be difficult to make cap with revenues being down and deferred charges up. She suggested that the Township Committee look at the budget for the next two weeks and suggest what departments they want to come to the next budget meeting.

Ms. Pasqua continued going page by page through the budget, as follows:

Clerk's Budget – an increase in legal advertising (over spent this year) and election costs will be up – it was increased by \$1,000.

Finance – No changes in the budget, and the shared service agreement is out of cap, so \$300 of the cost of classes is out of cap.

Auditor, Tax Collector, Tax Assessor budgets will remain the same.

Legal Services budget was over spent because of COAH and the expenses for new bond counsel.

Engineering required an additional \$5,000, with the Treasurer adding that she assesses the capital budget when appropriate, e.g., road projects, etc. To date, the expenses for the engineer have been \$14,055 thru November 30, with \$2,000 for work regarding the dispute on Back Brook and the drainage issue on Linvale Road. Mr. Van Horn recommended not calling upon the engineer as much and using the engineering services only as needed. Deputy Mayor Sageser asked about contacting the Hopewell Administrator for assistance; Mr. Matheny mentioned that the Administrator is also their engineer. Some comments were exchanged about the possibility of going out to bid for professionals; it was noted that Mr. O'Neal switched firms and went to Ferriero Engineering. Although there were comments about being happy with the services, the Committee commented on very high billing and "a slow and thorough" work product reflected in the bills. Mr. Van Horn stated that the budget should remain at \$15,000 and the engineer should only be called when necessary.

Historic Preservation wanted an increase of \$200.

Agricultural Advisory budget will remain as is.

Planning Board still has some funds although final bills for the year have not yet been received. COAH planner bills have been high. Mr. Miller commented on the Planner maxing out his \$12,000 budget, asking if his services would be "cut off"; he was advised that COAH is an on-going matter in the court system. Mayor Wang-Iverson believed that the Planner was almost done with the work for the year. Deputy Mayor Sageser commented on putting other items off in the budget to deal with COAH. It was agreed that this budget would not be cut until the court matter is over.

Zoning Board – The Administrator rate being higher than the secretary rate was explained. The increase in the line item for the secretarial position is due to an increase in workload.

COAH – No changes.

Insurance – Bills have not yet been received from PAIC.

Employee Group Insurance – Ms. Pasqua received the new rates today. The \$15,000 + year end balance is due to the fact that she has not yet applied for benefits although she is entitled to them. When her husband retires, she will apply for the benefits.

Police (Public Safety) – The budget had the increase for the additional hours from West Amwell Township up from \$15,000 to \$22,500.

Deputy Mayor Sageser mentioned only being able to anticipate what was received the previous year, and Ms. Pasqua mentioned revenues being down in 2015. She is also watching surplus to see the amount, saying that she is estimating \$20,000 less for next year. Mr. Van Horn asked about the fines at municipal court; Ms. Pasqua said it was budgeted at \$31,000 but the figure is \$36,000, but this is for all fines, not just West Amwell fines. On a question of whether West Amwell fines could be separated out, Mr. Matheny believed that the Court Administrator told him in the past that this would have to be done manually. Mr. Van Horn felt that it would be nice to see this information, but it was not necessary; he felt that the figure in the budget for West Amwell police patrol should remain at \$15,000 and he would not support the increase to \$22,500. Mayor Wang-Iverson spoke about the request for the police to have a presence on Lindbergh Road, but there are difficulties in stopping speeders in that area because of the narrow roads. Deputy Mayor Sageser commented on looking at the West Amwell data for further information.

Emergency Management – No changes in the budget. Mayor Wang-Iverson mentioned a new volunteer who wishes to assist.

Aid to the Ambulance Company – Ms. Pasqua asked about the \$29,000 donation to the squad in the budget. She was told that this was the figure contributed for years, and in the past, there used to be an additional \$28,000 allocation for capital projects. Mayor Wang-Iverson suggested that Peter Molnar from the squad be asked to attend the next budget meeting on January 14th to discuss the squad's request.

Fire Prevention Bureau – The budget for the SFSP Fire District Payment has been the same for the last two years, so Ms. Pasqua left that figure in the budget.

Prosecutor – Ms. Pasqua explained that somehow the out of cap piece of the salary was in two places in past budgets, so it was dropped in one section of this year's budget.

Department of Public Works – Ms. Pasqua spoke about the increase in overtime for storms in last year's budget. She increased that line item to \$15,000 but if there is a calm January, the line item could be reduced.

The line item for salt was increased by \$10,000; last year some of the funds were taken from the snow removal trust fund – this fund has been depleted from \$7,500 to \$750. Mr. Matheny also explained that the salt costs have gone up from \$57/ton to \$68/ton at the County and \$87/ton at the State.

There is still \$10,000 in the line item for abandoned buildings.

Solid Waste Collection – The salary and wage line item was reduced since the Treasurer can fund the salary through Clean Communities money.

Building and Grounds – Mr. Matheny explained that there may be some repairs needed at the SAFE house, owned by the Township. He explained that there was an agreement that SAFE in Hunterdon will pay the first \$900 of repairs. However, there are usually additional repairs made or paid by the Township. There is a leak in the skylight, pumping of the septic, etc. that are the Township's responsibility on the COAH property.

Vehicle Maintenance – No changes.

Health Services – A request for an increase in the legal budget (from \$300 to \$1,000) was to cover an ordinance that was going to be considered next year by the Board of Health. Mr. Van Horn believed that the budget should remain flat and the ordinance should be put on hold. Mayor Wang-Iverson suggested asking the Board Chair about the ordinance and any potential for increase in hours for the secretary.

NJPDES Permit – This item was in two places in the previous budget, so it was moved to the other section. No increases were proposed.

Environmental Commission – The secretary's salary and wage line was reduced to \$1,500 from \$1,800 based on this year's hours.

Contribution to Social Services – Ms. Pasqua asked about these lines that have not been utilized since 2013. She will zero out the lines.

Stormwater Permit - The line was reduced from \$2,000 to \$1,000 and the NJPDES permit was previously paid from this line.

Recreation – The summer playground salary was partially funded from the Recreation Trust Fund and the salary line will remain at \$2,000 for next year. Some discussion took place in the increase in the salary for the Recreation Committee secretary. It was noted that the secretary is being asked to perform more than secretarial duties in the position, i.e., taking over more responsibilities that volunteers have done in the past, e.g., tree lighting assistance, working on other events, etc. Deputy Mayor Sageser mentioned that this has been an historic problem, and the job description for the Recreation Secretary should be reviewed. Mr. Van Horn agreed that the volunteers should do more of the work that the secretary has been asked to perform.

The request for additional funds for recreation supplies was also discussed. The teen volleyball program was cited with a request for \$200 and movie nights were planned. Mr. Van Horn commented on the bingo night not being well attended, and he believed that a Township bingo program was unnecessary. Committee members exchanged some comments, adding that they were not in favor of another movie night being added. They believed that the public has access to a lot of entertainment already. Deputy Mayor Sageser commented on having a reasonable

number in the budget; Mr. Van Horn wanted no increase in the budget at all. Mayor Wang-Iverson agreed to speak with Chair Pete Fick, and the budget will remain as last year's.

Utility Expenses and Bulk Purchases – The telephone line item may be reduced to \$7,500 based on the switch to Comcast. Mr. Van Horn commented on soccer lights being turned off. Ms. Pasqua wanted to make sure that all bills were received before cancelling lines; she added that a new bill would be coming in for the grit-yard in the near future. While gas prices have dropped, Ms. Pasqua wanted to leave the line item the same in case prices increase.

Solid Waste Disposal Costs – The line was reduced from \$2,280 to \$280.

Contingent – No changes.

Public Employees Retirement System – This line was increased to \$55,000.

Social Security/Medicare – An adjustment of \$3,000 was made.

Unemployment Insurance – Bills come in a year behind, and they are usually very small. No changes were made.

Defined Contribution Retirement Plan – There is one employee in this plan, and there is money in forfeiture from a previous employee, which can be used, i.e., around \$1,000. Ms. Pasqua left \$200 in case another employee qualifies for this benefit.

Contributions to the Deferred Comp Plan – No changes.

Over Expenditure of Appropriation Reserve – Nothing.

Recycling Tonnage, Clean Communities, Matching Funds for Grants – Grants are offset on the revenue side, and the Township usually receives a recycling tonnage check in December and Clean Communities around March. The reserve for matching funds will remain the same.

Municipal Court - There is a request for an increase of \$3,000 for the Violations Clerk for increased hours. Some comments were made as to whether this amount was to be shared with Delaware Township. Mr. Van Horn asked why there would be an increase; Mr. Matheny explained that the workload is up with increases from West Amwell and Franklin Township, including e-tickets, more summonses, etc. The Violations Clerk also just passed her exam to become a certified Court Administrator, which may be a reason for the increase in rate along with increased hours. Deputy Mayor Sageser asked if the increase would be offset with income in the court; Mr. Matheny agreed to ask the Court Administrator.

Mr. Van Horn also asked about the cost for court security. Mr. Matheny explained that this is required by the State and Delaware Township provides security.

A recommendation was made to have Ms. Hooven come to the next budget meeting to discuss the court budget.

Public Defender – Ms. Pasqua spoke about lowering the amount in and out of cap. She also mentioned that there was a Public Defender's Trust Fund, but there is not much money in that account.

SFSP Fire District Payment – This budget item is being moved to a different portion of the budget.

Capital Improvements – Ms. Pasqua put \$50,000 in the Capital Improvement Fund – what is not used can be banked. Bond principal went up \$45,000 and there were two pieces to pay down. Bond and note interest went down because of lower interest rates.

Mr. Van Horn referred to the Capital Improvement page showing individual items. He stated that he did not support the salt barn replacement or purchase of a chipper. He was told that this list does not mean that the Township must purchase the items; the items will remain on the list but the Township may choose not to fund them.

Some discussion took place about use of a chipper, i.e., possibly having landscapers do chipping, having the tub grinder come to the grit-yard for a longer period of time, etc.

Special Emergency Appropriation – There are two more payments of \$10,000 in 2016 and 2017 for the reassessment.

Reserve for Uncollected Taxes – The number has been increased by \$20,000. Mayor Wang-Iverson said that the Tax Collector would be coming to the January 14th meeting to discuss the liens held by the Township.

Ms. Pasqua asked that Township Committee to review the budget sheets and get back to her in the next couple of weeks with any questions or concerns. She spoke about a budget increase from the prior year. She explained that the final pages showed revenues, some good but some low. She mentioned a one-time revenue of \$9600 after the refunding bonds were issued. She said that the tax was significant, i.e., \$1.32 with the budget provided tonight. She again asked that the governing body get back to her by the end of the year to let her know what they feel should be cut.

Additional miscellaneous requests, such as Raritan Headwaters, Meals on Wheels, etc. come into her office, and Ms. Pasqua asked for direction on what to do with these types of requests. She said that these requests were not in the budget as presented, with the governing body agreeing not to fund them.

Mr. Miller left the meeting at 7:25 p.m. with the intent of returning during the regular meeting after the school concert.

Mayor Wang-Iverson asked about the time line for the budget; Ms. Pasqua was planning on introducing the budget in March. She will need state numbers to further continue her work.

Ms. Pasqua previously provided the Clerk with a salary ordinance for reorganization; some discussion was held and it was decided that the ordinance will be introduced later in the year. Mr. Matheny said that he did a salary study for the positions in the office, based on previous discussions by the Township Committee to afford some equity to the staff in 2016, similar to what was done for two road crew members in 2015. It was agreed that the memo would be circulated to the staff tomorrow.

The meeting was open to the public for comments.

Frances Gavigan, 123 Wertsville Road, attended a Raritan Township Committee last week, wherein Flemington-Raritan Rescue Squad provided a resolution for consideration to be the primary rescue squad for this part of the county and have Amwell Valley be the secondary. She spoke about underfunding the local squad to the point that it would not be sustainable. She believed that Raritan would be considering this resolution in early January. She mentioned a potential impact on East Amwell Township, and she spoke about fees for service, e.g., \$1300 for an ambulance, which may or may not be covered by Medicare. She asked about the number of calls for mutual aid, adding that there is an expense and impact. She felt that if the local squad is not sustainable, the residents will be billed for future service. She believed that there was some urgency about reaching out to Raritan Township concerning this topic. Ms. Gavigan provided the following comments: the Flemington-Raritan Squad covers all of Raritan and Flemington; they are run by the Township and they were looking for a resolution from Raritan Township; she mentioned an East Amwell resident collapsing on a bus trip on Sunday who would have been in dire straits without the local Ambulance Corps and individuals on the bus trip; among other items.

Ms. Gavigan mentioned the Township hired a conflict engineer recently and the possibility of going out to bid for an engineer since a lot of money has been paid to Ferriero Engineering.

Motion by Mr. Van Horn, seconded by Deputy Mayor Sageser, and carried unanimously to close to the public.

There being no further business, motion by Mr. Van Horn, seconded by Deputy Mayor Sageser, and carried unanimously to adjourn the special meeting at 7:35 p.m.

Teresa R. Stahl, RMC/CMC
Municipal Clerk

Draft - Not yet approved