

**WESTAMPTON TOWNSHIP
COMMITTEE MEETING
March 5, 2024**

**6:00PM Budget Workshop Meeting
7:00 PM Regular Meeting, Courtroom
Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was called to order and opened at 6:02 PM by Mayor Sandy Henley. Requirements of the Sunshine Law were read. This meeting was advertised in the Burlington County Times on January 7, 2024. This meeting was held in person in the Westampton Township Municipal Building Courtroom. The flag was saluted and there was a moment of silence.

Roll Call:

Committeewoman Burkley	Absent
Committeeman Carr	Present
Mayor Henley	Present
Committeewoman Mungo	Present
Committeewoman Wright	Absent

Township Administrator Wendy Gibson, Assistant Administrator Sherrod Jones, Township Solicitor Robert Wright, Director of Public Works Chris Taylor, Fire/EMS Lieutenants Chad Bozoski and Vincent Knott, and Chief of Police Brian Ferguson were also present.

Workshop: 2024 Annual Municipal Budget

Mayor Sandy Henley opened the floor to our township department heads to present their proposals for the 2024 budget.

Township Administrator Wendy Gibson presented the 2024 annual Municipal budget to the Township Committee and residents. The agenda included the expenditures and planned budgets for the Administration, Department of Public Works, Police and Fire/EMS Departments, the revenues, 2024 Capital requests and the proposed property tax levy. She briefly went over the tax statistics for property tax shares, where the municipal share is at twenty eight percent and the school share is fifty six percent. Ms. Gibson reviewed the budget timeline, noting that the next budget workshop will be on Tuesday March 19, 2024, at 6:00PM. The introduction of the budget will be on April 2, 2024, with an adoption on May 7, 2024.

The 2024 proposed budget is \$14,464,365, which is \$458,765 over the 2023 budget. She noted that the major increases are due to rising costs in healthcare, personnel contracts, increased hiring of police and firefighters and overall inflation in the economy.

She reviewed the 1977 budget CAP law, and reviewed the items that were allowable outside the CAP, which are Capital expenditures, debt service payments, a reserve for uncollected taxes and shared service agreements. Other items include the pension retirement plans for PERS and PFRS, and any healthcare costs above four percent. She noted that any unused expenditures within the CAP can be banked for upcoming years. This year, Westampton Township is \$91,268.46 under the appropriation CAP. She stated that sixty six percent of the budget costs were due to personnel costs, noting that forty three percent were salaries, nine percent were benefits and thirteen percent were for retirement costs, where the Police and Fire Departments had the highest percentage of projected costs for 2024.

She reviewed the shared service agreements with neighboring towns with the Court, Construction, Tax, Fire, Emergency Services and Police Departments.

Ms. Gibson then asked Public Works Director Christian Taylor to present the department budget requests. Mr. Taylor reviewed his plan for personnel, which did not include an increase in personnel; he reviewed his expenditures for an overall increase in some items to accommodate in inflation; his capital requests to include a combination truck and leaf vacuum, which would cut down on the need for personnel, and facility upgrades to the Recreation Center and Public Works garage, and trash bins.

Ms. Gibson elaborated on the need to purchase trash toter bins for the upcoming trash collection contract that is currently out for bid. She explained that by having special cans, the Township would benefit from an increased number of bids from other collection agencies.

Mayor Henley asked about the repairs to the Recreation building, and why it wouldn't come from the Recreation budget. Ms. Gibson explained that building repairs would come from the Public Works Department. She explained that there was an overlap of services that were handled by each department. He also asked about the cost of snow plowing. Ms. Gibson reminded the Committee that the municipality is able to move funding at the end of the year to cover expenses from other line items.

Mayor Henley asked if our insurance covered the cost of the damaged leaf vacuum. Mr. Taylor explained that the truck was not damaged, but the vacuum could no longer be used. He also explained that he was looking to replace the unit with a combination vehicle, instead of a truck and a vacuum.

Gary Berberian, 138 Winstead Drive, asked if there was additional insurance coverage that could be placed on the replacement vehicle. Ms. Gibson stated that the Municipal JIF covered all of the Township Vehicles. He then asked about additional grant opportunities through the legislative offices to help cover the costs of the projects.

Ms. Gibson then asked Chief of Police Brian Ferguson to present the Police Department budget requests. He presented his Capital requests to include two patrol vehicles and an

updated alcotest machine. He noted that he was attempting to offset the costs by entering into a shared service agreement with neighboring townships.

He then reviewed his basic budget items, which are for equipment, uniform costs, firearms, services, and overtime costs. He spoke about the vehicle maintenance costs and how the Public Works Department was able to offset some of the costs.

His personnel plan included the hiring of two additional police officers. He noted that he has not yet backfilled the position left open by the previous Chief's retirement.

His goal was to increase police coverage from two to three officers, due to the increase in population, calls, and paperwork. He stated that another goal was community engagement, with various activities to engage with residents. He announced he was introducing an adult police academy in addition to the Junior Police Academy and crime prevention workshops.

Mayor Henley asked if the Police Department was approached by the local schools for a School Resource Officer. Chief Ferguson stated that he was not approached. Mayor Henley commented that School Resource Officers could help offset the costs of hiring new officers, and also commented on the increase in population due to Laurel Run increasing the need for more officers. He then commented that retired officers could come back to become School Resource Officers.

Mr. Berberian asked if the liquor license holders in the township could be levied to cover some of the cost of the new alcotest machine. Township Solicitor Robert Wright noted that the liquor licenses are regulated by the Alcohol Beverage Control in the State, and that separate levies are not allowable.

Ms. Gibson then asked Lieutenant Chad Bozoski and Lieutenant Vincent Knott to present the Fire/EMS Department budget. Lieutenant Bozoski began with the increase in need for more full-time firefighters, noting that the calls for service have increased. He noted that the maintenance costs have not increased, but equipment and supplies have increased. There will be no increase in costs for training. He stated that there were some grant awards that helped offset some of the costs. He also stated that the vehicle maintenance costs have decreased due to the sale of the ladder truck and older ambulances.

He stated that the part-time and per diem costs were decreased to accommodate for the hiring of more full-time officers. He also addressed the issue of the difficulty in recruitment efforts to find full-time officers. He addressed the Capital expenditures, requesting additional Fire and EMS equipment, technology upgrades that were necessary for insurance coverage by the JIF, and Personal Protective Equipment.

Lieutenant Bozoski then commented on some of the accomplishments, which included grant awards, software upgrades for policies and procedures, the purchase of the new ladder truck and the trade in for older ambulances for two new ambulances. He noted the feasibility study for a new firehouse, and a shared service agreement for Fire services

with Mount Holly Township. He stated that three additional personnel were hired, and they held their second Fire Academy with neighboring townships.

Some accomplishments for 2024 will be to seek additional grand funding, decrease call volume, and increase service with the Fire Marshal Office, and a five-year strategic plan. Mr. Berberian asked about the JIF technology costs, and if it would help offset the costs of coverage for the Township. Ms. Gibson confirmed that if we increase the coverage, it will help mitigate the costs.

Ms. Gibson resumed the presentation with a discussion about the revenues, noting that the revenues were down for Construction and EMS fees. This was due to the residential units in Laurel Run submitting permits in 2022 rather than 2023, where additional revenue could not be captured, and an offset in EMS fees due to an over anticipation in the previous year. She also noted that Court fees and Federal and State funding were also down.

She reviewed the Property Tax Levy Cap Law and noted that additional taxation was possible due to the bank of any unused Cap from previous years. She explained that the operating expenses were six percent above the previous year, and that the proposed tax levy would be an increase of six and a half cents with a deferral of school taxes, which would be an average increase to taxpayers of \$156.00 per year.

Ms. Gibson asked the Committee members not to make any decisions at the meeting, but to review the materials they were provided and then reserve any additional questions for the next budget workshop, where she would recap what was discussed this evening. She asked them to provide a decision for the introduction of the Budget at the April 2, 2024 meeting.

Committeeman Carr asked about the debt service payment, which was in excess of one million dollars, as noted on the worksheets provided to the Committee by the Township Auditor.

Mr. Berberian then commented on the debt service and asked if a bond sale was possible. Ms. Gibson confirmed that the Township went on a bond sale in the previous year, and that there wasn't anything more that could be sold.

Mr. Carr asked if a projection could be made for year 2025, but Ms. Gibson stated that it would be nearly impossible to provide a projection due to the multitude of components that made up the municipal budget.

Finally, she thanked Fire/EMS Chief Craig Farnsworth for his help and support with the annual budget.

The Committee took a brief break in between the workshop and the regular meeting.

The regular meeting resumed at 7:03PM.

Presentation: Safety on the Agenda – Joe Henry, Hardenbergh Insurance Group

Mr. Henry presented the annual safety message in the investigation and root causes of accidents, and putting corrective action in place.

Approval of Minutes:

a. February 20, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve was made by Ms. Mungo; seconded by Mr. Carr.

Motion carried 3-0.

Ayes: Carr, Mungo, Mayor Henley

Naye: none

Abstain: none

b. February 20, 2024 Executive Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve was made by Mr. Carr; seconded by Ms. Mungo.

Motion carried 3-0.

Ayes: Carr, Mungo, Mayor Henley

Naye: none

Abstain: none

Open Meeting for Public Comments on Agenda Items Only:

None.

All in favor to close public comment.

Ordinances: Second Reading, Public

a. 4-2024 An Ordinance of the Township of Westampton Amending and Supplementing Westampton Township Code Chapter 128 Entitled: Fire Prevention.

Gary Berberian, 138 Winstead Drive, asked about the fire watch portion of the Ordinance, specifically speaking about active employees. Lieutenant Vincent Knott answered that the Fire Department has not had any volunteer employees that would impact the Ordinance.

He also commented on the standby services to have an ambulance present, and asked if they were offered for warehouses, due to the number of people present. Lieutenant Knott stated that if fire personnel or an ambulance were requested, it would be provided. He stated that the Ordinance cleared up the language of what was originally written.

Motion to approve was made by Ms. Mungo; seconded by Mr. Carr.

Motion carried: 3-0.

Ayes: Carr, Mungo, Mayor Henley

Naye: none

Abstain: none

b. 5-2024 An Ordinance of the Township of Westampton Amending and Supplementing Westampton Township Code Chapter 128 Property Maintenance to Add Article II “Lead-Based Paint Inspections”.

Township Solicitor Robert Wright addressed some of Committeewoman Burkley’s questions, since she was not present. She asked about the multiple dwelling unit exception. Mr. Wright stated that they are exempt from the law if they have their State annual inspection. He also stated that the law only applies to residential dwellings and not commercial buildings. He stated that she suggested that a rental registration policy be implemented, but the Township already has one which is already in place.

Motion to approve was made by Ms. Mungo; seconded by Mr. Carr.

Motion carried: 3-0.

Ayes: Carr, Mungo, Mayor Henley

Naye: none

Abstain: none

Resolutions:

- a. 40-24 Payment of Vouchers – this resolution approves the payment of bills through 03/05/2024

Motion to approve was made by Mr. Carr; seconded by Ms. Mungo.

Motion carried 3-0.

Ayes: Carr, Mungo, Mayor Henley,

Naye: none

Abstain: none

Consent Agenda Resolutions:

Consent Agenda items are considered to be routine and will be enacted with a single motion; any items requiring expenditure are supported by a Certification of Availability of funds; any items requiring discussion will be removed from the Consent Agenda.

- a. 41-24 Resolution Refunding Tax Duplicate Payment
- b. 42-24 Resolution Approving Refunds for Totally Disabled Veteran
- c. 43-24 Resolution Awarding Purchase of Playground Equipment
- d. 44-24 Resolution Authorizing 2024 State Contracts
- e. 45-24 Resolution Appointing Municipal Judge

Motion to table Resolution 41-24 was made by Mr. Carr; seconded by Ms. Mungo.

Motion carried 3-0.

Ayes: Carr, Mungo, Mayor Henley

Naye: none

Abstain: none

Motion to approve Resolutions 42-24 through 45-24 was made by Mr. Carr; seconded by Ms. Mungo.

Motion carried 3-0.

Ayes: Carr, Mungo, Mayor Henley

Naye: none

Abstain: none

Open Meeting for Public Comment:

Gary Berberian, 138 Winstead Drive, asked if there was a card prepared for fallen Officer Cullen, and asked if anything was planned at the building. Chief Brian Ferguson stated that he has authorized a patch to be worn by the officers of the Township that was specially designed to honor him. Mr. Berberian left a card for anyone to sign for the family.

All in favor to close public comment.

Dates to Remember:

Next Township Committee Meeting March 19th – Budget Workshop @6PM, Regular Meeting @ 7PM, Historic Commission March 27th @ 7PM, Land Development Board Meeting March 6th @7PM, Recreation Committee Meeting March 13th @7PM, Easter Egg Hunt March 23rd 9:30AM. Movie day at Change Church Saturday March 9th at 3PM.

Committee Liaison Reports/Comments:

Committeewoman Mungo thanked the department heads for sharing their budget requests. She also thanked Mr. Berberian for his questions and comments.

Committeeman Carr thanked the department heads and noted that they all took their jobs very seriously. He thanked them for being at the meeting.

Mayor Henley thanked everyone for coming out and wanted to recognize the Fire Department for presenting, as the Chief was unable. He also thanked Mr. Berberian for his questions, and for the Lieutenants for being prepared to answer the questions. He stated that it is because of these circumstances that someone could tell how strong the leaders are when they are not present.

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Ms. Mungo; seconded by Mr. Carr.

All in favor to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 7:23 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Gibson, Municipal Clerk