

**WESTAMPTON TOWNSHIP
COMMITTEE MEETING
February 21, 2023**

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

The meeting was called to order and opened at 6:00 PM by Mayor Sandy Henley. Requirements of the Sunshine Law were read. This meeting was advertised in the Burlington County Times on January 6, 2023. 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	Present
Committeeman Carr	Present
Mayor Henley	Present
Committeewoman Mungo	Present
Committeewoman Wright	Absent

Township Administrator, Deputy Clerk, Township Solicitor, Township Planner, Director of Public Works, Chief of Police and Fire/EMS Chief were also present.

Workshop: 2023 Annual Municipal Budget

Mayor Sandy Henley opened the floor to our township departments heads to present their proposals for the 2023 budget.

Township Administrator Wendy Gibson presented the 2023 Annual Municipal Budget. The proposed budget included expenditures that totaled under the allowable 3.5% CAP and a proposed tax rate increase of \$0.056. Chris Taylor presented the budget request for the Public Works Department, discussing a personnel plan to back fill any positions that become available from any current personnel retiring. He also spoke about increases to his operating expense line items and capital requests, such as a zero-turn lawnmower and a tire balancer.

Chief Stephen Ent presented the budget request for the Police Department and noted that the operating expenses will remain fixed to last year's amounts, and requested capital items such as vehicles, and radar antennas.

Chief Craig Farnsworth presented the budget request for the Fire/EMS Department and stated that most of the operating expenses would remain fixed to last year's amounts with slight increases. He also discussed his personnel plan, which eliminated per diem employees and created full time positions. The capital request for the Fire/EMS

Department was for a new ambulance, as he stated that it might take up to three years to acquire.

Motion to close the workshop was made by Ms. Burkley; seconded by Ms. Mungo
All in favor to close workshop.

The Committee took a 30-minute break in between the Budget meeting and the Regular Meeting.

Mayor Henley asked for a Motion and Second to open the regular meeting to order.

Motion to open the regular meeting was made by Ms. Burkley; seconded by Ms. Mungo
All in favor to open regular meeting.

Open Meeting for Public Comments on Agenda Items Only:

Before any residents spoke, our Township Solicitor Bob Wright, reminded everyone that this portion of the meeting is for comment only. The Township Planner will be available at the next meeting to address any questions or comments from this evening's meeting. The public comment period is not intended as a question-and-answer period. If anyone would like a response, please leave your contact information on the podium so the Township Committee or the Township Administrator can respond appropriately. He also stated that everyone would be allowed three minutes to comment, in order to give everyone an opportunity to speak.

Luis Lopez, Mount Holly resident, first commented on the solar program, and asked for an explanation. He would like to see the current Virtua property stay as is, farmland. He stated he was happy to be back to see his friends at the meeting. Mr. Lopez is also asking if any of the committee members know if a war veteran who lives, or has lived, in town is still alive.

Kristina Goetz, 109 West Maple Tree Drive, would like Ordinance number 1-2023 to be tabled and amended. She would like to see section three be removed from the Ordinance. Ms. Goetz referenced the Vision Plan from 2010 in comparison to the Master Plan Appendix that was recently completed. She referenced that several overlays were not currently on the zoning map on the Township's website, and also commented that the heights of the warehouses were different from the suggested Appendix approved by the Land Development Board.

David Guerrero, 121 Sharpless Blvd., stated that he assisted with the process through the Land Development Board, and listed changes from the original Appendix to the Ordinance. He specifically spoke about the proximity of the Virtua property to developments and schools. He stated that the area is sensitive, and the proposed zoning is not appropriate.

John Anderson, 720 Woodlane Road, believes the master plan technical appendix is in violation with the Right to Farm Act.

Ivonne Henriquez, 16 Devonshire Drive, states that a lot of the residents do not know what is going on, and does not want any warehouses surrounding a residential area, and that Westampton is not an industrial park, it is a community. She wanted to know how to get residents involved to participate in fighting the warehouses coming to Westampton.

Chris Hamilton, 16 St. Andrews Court, does not want Ordinance 1-2023 to pass, he is very against the warehouse being built. He states that putting a warehouse in the center of town will ruin the town.

Shyvonne Ballard, 14 Brighton Court, stated she has lived in the community for thirty years. She stated that there are too many warehouses, and the Committee doesn't value the community.

Ron Kuriskin, 4 Oak Tree Court, brought up concerns and changes he would like made to the Ordinance 1-2023, specifically to industrial and residential districts. He stated that warehouses should be removed and prohibited in certain zones. He also referenced the Route 541 Transportation Circulation plan from Burlington County, which reviews traffic problems in the 541 corridor. He stated that the warehouses would cause traffic issues.

Charles Lawrence, 8 Municipal Drive, Lumberton, stated that even though he doesn't live in Westampton Township, he does a lot of work in the township. He referenced a study from 2020 regarding farmland but stated that the statistics of the study didn't add up. He listed the various crops that New Jersey farmed and stated that he was worried where the food would come from.

Don Chierici, 210 Bridge Street, a resident of forty-six years, stated that the Township's website had pictures of the township, but none of the warehouses. He stated that there are sites ready to be built that do not yet have tenants. He stated he would rather pay more in taxes than have warehouses built.

April Middleton, 29 Lawrence Lane, stated that the Township is building all new houses, but there aren't any new schools being built. She would like to see a new school built or at least additions built onto the existing schools in Westampton, instead of warehouses being built.

Terrance Brown, 9 Pine Tree Drive, commented on how the Ordinance is written, and is trying to determine if there is a reexamination of the 2020 Master Plan, or if it becomes the Master Plan of 2020. He referenced Census data, and stated that the Virtua property in the center of the township, would make over five million square feet of warehouses. He then referenced the Community Vision Plan in 2011, and stated it might be time to revisit the plan.

Chris D'Alessandro, 119 2nd Street, Rancocas Village, stated that garbage in the township is everywhere. He would like to know what the committee will do to address the garbage issue. Mr. D'Alessandro also thinks that the potential warehouses being built in Westampton would be a terrible idea. He asks that the Committee reconsider the idea due to all of the truck stops and traffic.

Gary Berberian, 138 Winstead Drive, wants to know if there is a fiscal impact statement that accompanies Ordinance 1-2023, as he was unable to find one. He referenced the budget and the requests from the Fire Department and how warehouses will impact the personnel and equipment. Mr. Berberian thinks it's great that members of our community volunteer to be members of the different committees within our town; but he would like to know more about Ashley Boone, who was appointed as a member of the Recreation Committee. He asked if a vision statement was provided to the Committee before being appointed, and what role do these individuals play with regard to the budget. He then asked about EcoTech, and stated that the agreement stated that the company will keep all information confidential unless required by law, and asked what they were referring to. He also asked if the insurance clause amount written into the agreement was enough.

Arden Baldassare, 429 West Country Club Drive, wanted to speak against the warehouses being built in the area. She was concerned that it was not in the original Master Plan. She believes that every farm could be turned into a warehouse, and the property value will decline. She claims that warehouses will lead to traffic accidents, delays in emergency services, and will affect the wellbeing of the residents. She also asked what would be stored in the warehouses, and referenced the chemical spills across the continent and human trafficking.

Susan Baldassare, 429 West Country Club Drive, had a question regarding the warehouses, and if the warehouse serves Westampton's greater good. She asked if they produce economic development within the township. She stated that her development was built on farmland and generates a significant amount of taxes. She believes that the warehouses do not provide as much in taxes and feels that warehouses are not a good idea.

Kirsten Bjork-Jones, 120 West Maple Tree Drive, appreciates that the Land Development Board is not going to be re-zoning certain blocks and lots in Westampton that changes the zoning of properties from residential to industrial.

Justin Wright, 15 Brighton Road, he grew up in Westampton and is now raising his family here. He stated that driving around the town seeing empty lots is an eyesore. He also stated he couldn't imagine having a warehouse around the corner from his house.

John Davidson, 32 Tallowood Drive, stated that he moved into Westampton because there was a lack of warehouses in this town. He stated that he works in the industry, and that most of the warehouses were empty. He stated the Ordinance seemed to be tailored for someone to make money. Stated that having warehouses in Westampton was a bad idea, and that property values decline.

Ryan Bird, 304 Irick Road, he mentioned the height of the warehouses is increasing, and goes against what is already considered a problem. He asked if the grading could be deeper embedded into the ground, and higher landscaping to allow for higher grade warehouses. He stated that he moved to Westampton to be closer to family, and that his investment will be ruined with warehouses.

Bill Rudolph, 10 Manner Drive, asked everyone to imagine painting a picture of what the town they live in looks like, and then present it to the Committee. He stated that all of the Township officials were responsible to help everyone with their dreams and hopes of what they want to look at. He stated that no one would want a warehouse, and that he would rather have a Panera Bread.

Tom Bundschuh, 105 West Maple Tree Drive, stated that he moved there because there weren't a lot of warehouses or a traffic problem. He commented that he wasn't as heavily invested as some of the other people present, and that the Committee should listen to them.

Motion to close public comment made by Ms. Burkley, seconded by Ms. Mungo. All in favor to close public comment.

Mayor Henley asked for a motion to table the Ordinance so that the information could be digested.

Ordinances:

- a. 1-2023 An Ordinance of the Township of Westampton Amending and Supplementing Westampton Township Code Chapter 250 Entitled Zoning, and Chapter 196 Entitled Site Plan Review in Accordance with the 2022 Master Plan

Motion to table Ordinance 1-2023 was made by Ms. Mungo; seconded by Mr. Carr
All in favor to table Ordinance 1-2023.

Monthly Reports:

- a. Construction Department
- b. Police Department
- c. Public Works

Resolutions:

- a. 35-23 Payment of Vouchers – this resolution approves the payment of bills through 02/21/2023.

Motion to approve was made by Ms. Burkley; seconded by Ms. Mungo.

Motion carried 4-0.

Ayes: Burkley, 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. 34-23 Resolution Authorizing Shared Service Agreement for Fire Department Services with Lumberton Township
- b. 36-23 Resolution Authorizing Purchase of Police Interceptor Vehicle
- c. 37-23 Resolution Authorizing Risk Management Consultant Agreement
- d. 38-23 Resolution appointing Recreation Committee Member
- e. 39-23 Resolution Authorizing Contract for Mold Remediation and Repairs to Police Department
- f. 40-23 Resolution Authorizing Shared Service Agreement for School Resource Officer for BCIT
- g. 41-23 Resolution Authorizing Support of Solar Renewable Energy
- h. 42-23 Resolution Authorizing Purchase of Scan Tool for Public Works Department

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

Motion carried 4-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mungo, Mayor Henley

Naye: none

Abstain: none

Open Meeting for Public Comment:

Luis Lopez, Mount Holly resident, asked about a property behind the Burger King on 541. He also asked about a Westampton resident who lived in town who was a war veteran. He stated he was doing a Facebook Live broadcast of the meeting. He stated that he has broadcasts of Burlington County on YouTube.

Anthony Goetz, 109 West Maple Tree Drive, pointed out that he believes there are a lot of mistakes that are made by the Township Committee and staff. Mr. Goetz said that at the reorganization meeting on January 3, 2023, he believes the Mayor and Deputy Mayor were not properly voted in that night. He believes that any action taken by the Committee since then was invalid.

Township Solicitor Bob Wright replied to Mr. Goetz that he was not present for the January 3, 2023, reorganization meeting. He said he will go back and review the video and minutes to validate accuracy. He also stated that the actions taken by the Committee are not void, but only if it substantially affects the actions of the board. All of the members have been duly elected to their positions. Roll call or voice call vote would not render a deficiency of the committee. The role of the Mayor is to act as chair of the body.

Terrance Brown, 9 Pine Tree Drive, would like to comment on consistency. He stated that he hasn't seen any newsletters posted on the Township's website in a couple months. He would like to know why because he enjoyed reading the newsletters each month.

Wendy Gibson, Township Administrator, replied to Mr. Brown that the newsletter has been posted to the township website every month, and is available for download and view.

Gary Berberian, 138 Winstead Drive, went to coffee with a cop and said it was a great event. He thanked Chief Ent and all of the officers. He looks forward to going to more events that are hosted by the Police Officers and expressed it's a great way to interact with them. He stated he was very impressed with Officer Washington and commented on the Chief's command with the development of the demeanor in the department.

Mr. Berberian said he attended the County Commissioners meeting on February 8, 2023, an authorization of memorandum of understanding for transitioning active service members into civilian public safety. He noted that it could be a pipeline for talent, and asked if the Township could benefit. He stated it could be helpful for recruiting.

Dan McGonigle, 200 Bridge Street, ask if there was any update on the money Committeeman Carr was looking into for open space conservation.

All in favor to close public comment.

Administrator's Report:

Township Administrator Wendy Gibson corrected a comment made by a Committee member from the last meeting. She stated that the Certified Finance Officer was not responsible for completing the annual Municipal Budget, but the Township Administrator was. The change had been written into the Township Code per Chapter 4 Section A number 3.

She also commented on the issue of the employee morale, as brought up by resident Terrance Brown. She stated that personnel changes were due to retirements, and that a new team of employees had been hired and work hard every day to make the township better for the residents. She stated that the employees have taken it upon themselves to seek education and growth opportunities, and they have team building exercises to strengthen their relationships with one another. She expects everyone to perform their duties as asked and does not micromanage.

Her last comment was on the agenda items. She commented that despite a topic not listed on the agenda, residents were still encouraged to attend the meetings and voice their concerns to the Committee and staff. She offered residents to reach out before the meetings to any staff member to have questions answered.

Dates to Remember:

Next Township Committee Meeting March 7th Budget Workshop at 6PM Regular meeting at 7PM, Land Development Board Meeting April 5th at 7PM, Historic Commission February 22nd at 7PM, Recreation Committee March 8th at 7 PM.

Committee Liaison Reports/Comments:

Committeewoman Jaime Mungo thanked the department heads for their budget presentations. She also thanked all the residents for coming out to the meeting and voicing all their concerns. She hopes that tabling the Ordinance will bring resolution to an agreement.

Committeeman Odise Carr thanked the department heads for putting together their budget proposals. He stated that the Appendix recommends that the body reach out to the County regarding the needs of the community. He stated that he would like to see the budget maintain focus of the Master Plan to allow opening of other zoning areas.

Committeewoman Nancy Burkley thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. She understands the importance of farming and open space, she does not want this town filled with a bunch of warehouses. She wants to keep the rural look of the town. Ms. Burkley provided amendments she wanted on the Ordinance to the Master Plan, if it was to move forward. Specifically, deleting conditionally permitting warehouses in the medical overlay, restoration of original recommended building height, and restrict distance between schools or other buildings. She also stated she didn't know what was changed from the Land Development Board recommendation.

Mayor Sandy Henley stated that the committee is constantly encouraging residents to come out to the township meetings, and he hopes they continue to do so. He understands everyone's concerns, but he also wants to be fair to all the residents and not just the few that came out to the meeting. He noted that there were roughly 11,000 people in the township, and although there are a number of residents who don't mind their taxes increasing, there are many that do.

He stated he has been a resident here for twenty-one years, and there is no one more invested in Westampton than he is. He stressed that every single person on the Committee is different, who have different opinions and different views on things and different ways to handle situations. The members discuss the issues, and they listen to the residents' concerns. One of the concerns was a lack of space for the schools, but previously the community did not want to support the purchase of the Friend's school.

Mayor Henley also drafted a letter to the County Commissioner's office asking them to come out to address the concerns about the homeless shelter. In closing he just asks that everyone please be respectful of one another and if anyone wants to reach out to him, he will be available.

All in favor to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 8:23PM

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Gibson, Acting Municipal Clerk