

**WESTAMPTON TOWNSHIP
COMMITTEE MEETING
March 19, 2024**

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

The meeting was called to order and opened at 6:03 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	Present
Committeeman Carr	Present
Mayor Henley	Present
Committeewoman Mungo	Absent
Committeewoman Wright	Present

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

Workshop: 2024 Annual Municipal Budget

Assistant Administrator Sherrod Jones opened the budget workshop and presented the budget recap slides. He went over the remaining budget timeline, the proposed budget, the increase over the previous year budget, and the various revenues. He briefly spoke about the Construction Department and EMS Department fees being less than the previous year. He reviewed the Capital requests for the Fire, Police and Public Works Departments. He reviewed the increase in the tax levy and the deferral of school taxes needed for the average individual household tax increase.

Committeewoman Burkley asked how the tax increase was over three percent. Ms. Gibson asked her to confirm if she was speaking about the tax levy cap increase and confirmed that the Township is allowed to exceed the cap due to previous year's banked cap that was never used.

Ms. Burkley also noted that she was concerned about taking out additional bonds for further purchases and asked about the trash bins. Ms. Gibson confirmed that everything on the Capital list was up for discussion until the Committee voted on it.

Mayor Henley confirmed that everything on the list is up for discussion as it is a proposal. The Committee can discuss what it will take to honor all of the wish list items.

Mr. Jones opened the workshop for public comment.

Gary Berberian, 138 Winstead Drive, asked about the items in the Capital fund. Ms. Gibson confirmed that the items listed are what was needed to conduct business for the residents, and they are high price items that have to be financed. They are also items that have a life span of over five years, which qualifies them for separate financing outside of the operating budget.

She stated that what they were asking for was items that were needed to proceed with services to the residents. She confirmed that the items on the list were the least expensive items when quoted. She stated that the tote bins on the list were needed in order to secure better bids from trash companies, since the bids that were historically received were for manual collection, which could drive the prices up for the next bid cycle.

Mayor Henley asked if the bins would increase the quantity of bids received. Ms. Gibson confirmed that it will. He also asked if the bids would come in at a lower price. Ms. Gibson stated that trash collection will increase altogether due to inflation. She stated that with the full automation option, we may receive a higher quantity of bids, but was unsure about the bid pricing that would be returned. Mayor Henley stated that he felt the benefit of getting the totes would be the increase in options from different companies, since residents were not happy with the current company.

Public Works Director Christian Taylor stated that the difference in cost between manual and automated trash collection is a difference of about fifteen dollars, but the cost in trash collection will increase if we stay with manual collection.

Ms. Burkley wanted to know if other townships were consulted who utilize the automated trash collection to see how they like being restricted to one trash can.

Mayor Henley stated that he heard Willingboro Township had an issue with the trash cans but said that residents wouldn't be happier with manual collection due to service issues. He stated that he'd rather have more options to choose from.

Township Solicitor Robert Wright stated that when Cherry Hill Township became automated, the feedback was generally positive, and residents preferred aesthetic values. There was one concern about the size of the bins. Some towns allow for additional bins.

Ms. Gibson requested that TrashPro include additional bins in the bid specifications.

Ms. Gibson asked the Committee to provide direction for the budget, which she stressed was not an Ordinance, but a series of Resolutions with a public hearing.

Mr. Berberian asked if the neighborhood signs could be added to the Capital budget expense. Ms. Gibson stated that the Township Committee had requested to form a neighborhood sign committee to reconstruct some of the signs that were in need of repair, and that the community redevelopment funds received from PILOTs could be used to fund that project.

Mr. Berberian commented on the trash collection, noting that it was safer to have the bins for collection rather than garbage haphazardly placed curbside.

Ms. Burkley wanted the Public Works budget to be discussed, as she felt the price of the leaf truck was too high. Mr. Wright stated that the budget will be voted on and approved, but when the actual purchase occurs, the vehicle of choice will be put in front of the Committee for approval. He also confirmed that the vehicle being requested could be used year-round for many different purposes and is a bit more expensive than what was being replaced. She was concerned that the Township just bought a large vehicle, and if it was necessary to purchase another vehicle. Mr. Taylor confirmed that the requested truck is rated differently than what was previously purchased.

The Committee advised that the Township could move forward with the budget as it was presented in the workshops.

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

The regular meeting resumed at 7:00PM.

Presentation: Fire/EMS and Police Department Annual Reports

Chiefs Craig Farnsworth and Brian Ferguson presented their department annual reports to the Committee. The reports are available on the Township website and on their social media pages.

Approval of Minutes:

- a. March 5, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

Motion carried 3-0-1.

Ayes: Carr, Mayor Henley, Wright

Naye: none

Abstain: Burkley

Abstain: none

Open Meeting for Public Comments on Agenda Items Only:

Raymond Holshue, Westampton Township Construction Official, discussed the Construction report and provided examples of the fees collected, in order to answer questions from residents from previous meetings.

Mr. Berberian questioned the fees collected for certificate of occupancy for apartments in the D. R. Horton development. Mr. Holshue confirmed that the certificate of occupancy cannot be issued until the units are completed. He also confirmed that a certificate of continuing occupancy is issued for rental units, but the Fire Department is also involved in the process, in addition to the Construction Department.

All in favor to close public comment.

Resolutions:

- a. 46-24 Payment of Vouchers – this resolution approves the payment of bills through 03/19/2024

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

Motion carried 4-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mayor Henley, Wright

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. 47-24 Resolution Awarding Contract for Professional Services
- c. 48-24 Resolution Amending the Shared Service Agreement with Hainesport Township for Construction Services
- d. 49-24 Resolution Establishing Promotional Criteria for Westampton Township Police Department
- e. 50-24 Resolution Approving Refunds for Totally Disabled Veteran

Motion to approve Resolutions 41-24, and 48-24 through 50-24 was made by Mr. Carr; seconded by Mayor Henley.

Motion carried 4-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mayor Henley, Wright

Naye: none

Abstain: none

Motion to approve Resolution 47-24 and to nominate Smithbridge, LLP was made by Mr. Carr; seconded by Ms. Wright.

Motion carried 4-0.

Ayes: Carr, Mungo, Mayor Henley

Naye: none

Abstain: none

Ms. Burkley expressed her concern regarding the handling of criminal defense work within the same county. Mr. Wright confirmed that the respondents to the Request for Proposals had to provide confirmation of any conflict of interest as an attorney. He stated he was confident of the prohibition, and they were willing to take it on. Ms. Burkley stated that Smithbridge, LLP was the only firm able to take on the responsibility. Mayor Henley stated that the firm has already worked with the judge and if there were any changes to be made, they could be done next year.

Open Meeting for Public Comment:

Gary Berberian, 138 Winstead Drive, gave a well done to the budget workshops. He also stated he has seen where the State aid was being reduced across the State of New Jersey. He also acknowledged that the Township is looking for more grant money to help offset costs for the Fire Station

He stated that the Windmere Fire Station in Edmonton, Canada was a state-of-the-art Fire Station, and suggested that the Township have a zoom call for tips on Westampton's design.

He also commented on the Police Annual Report and suggested that the Police Department get involved with the Boy Scouts for a service project.

He noted that he stopped at the Walgreen's that was closing and asked if the Township was notified of the closings. He asked if there was a State or County effort to see if the vendor would change their mind.

He also asked if the Township received the minutes from various Condominium HOA's. He stated he saw the minutes from the Westampton Condominium HOA where is showed a dispute between the Township and the HOA for the cost of snow removal. He questioned what the Township was being invoiced for.

All in favor to close public comment.

Dates to Remember:

Next Township Committee Meeting April 2nd @ 7PM, Historic Commission March 27th @ 7PM, Land Development Board Meeting April 3rd @7PM, Recreation Committee Meeting April 10th @7PM, Easter Egg Hunt March 23rd @ 9:30AM.

Committee Liaison Reports/Comments:

Committeewoman Burkley congratulated the Chiefs for their annual reports. She also stated that what was received in grant money for the Fire Station was not a disappointment. Lastly, she stated she appreciated all of the professionals, stating they are all doing a great job.

Committeeman Carr echoed Ms. Burkley's comments. He thanked the Chiefs, Mr. Holshue and Public Works.

Mayor Henley echoed the same support. He stated that there was a Timbuctoo Movie Day, where he had support from the Police and Fire Departments. He stated that the Police and Fire never disappoint, and they really care about supporting their community. He stated he did not know what would happen when Chief Farnsworth retired, and he stated he hoped to be around when Chief Ferguson retired. He noted that they came from great leadership.

He also stated he appreciated (Solicitor) Bob Wright, (DPW Director) Chris Taylor, (Construction Official) Ray Holshue and (Township Clerk/Administrator) Wendy Gibson. He stated that there was probably not a harder working person than Wendy, and no matter what goes on, she shows up and delivers the best product she can.

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Ms. Burkley; seconded by Mr. Carr.
All in favor to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 7:42 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Gibson, Municipal Clerk