

**WESTAMPTON TOWNSHIP
COMMITTEE MEETING
April 2, 2024**

**7:00 PM Regular Meeting, Courtroom
Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was called to order and opened at 7:00 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 Lieutenant Vince Knott, and Chief of Police Brian Ferguson were also present.

Approval of Minutes:

a. March 19, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

Motion carried 4-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mayor Henley, Wright

Naye: none

Abstain: none

Open Meeting for Public Comments on Agenda Items Only:

None

Mr. Carr moved to close public comment.

All in favor to close public comment.

Ordinances, First Reading:

a. 6-2024 Calendar Year 2024 Ordinance to Exceed the Municipal Budget
Appropriation Limits and to Establish a CAP Bank

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

Motion carried 4-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mayor Henley, Wright

Naye: none

Abstain: none

- b. 7-2024 Bond Ordinance Authorizing the Acquisition of Various Capital Equipment and Completion of Various Capital Improvements in and for the Township of Westampton, County of Burlington, New Jersey; Appropriating the sum of \$1,094,135 Therefor; Authorizing the Issuance of General Obligation Bonds or Bond Anticipation Notes of the Township of Westampton, County of Burlington, New Jersey in the Aggregate Principal Amount of Up to \$1,039,427; Making Certain Determinations and Covenants; and Authorizing Certain Related Actions in Connection with the Foregoing

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

Motion carried 4-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mayor Henley, Wright

Naye: none

Abstain: none

Resolutions:

- a. 51-24 Payment of Vouchers – this resolution approves the payment of bills through 04/02/2024

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

Motion carried 4-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mayor Henley, Wright

Naye: none

Abstain: none

- b. 52-24 Resolution Approving the Deferral of Local School District Taxes

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

Motion carried 4-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mayor Henley, Wright

Naye: none

Abstain: none

- c. 53-24 Resolution to Introduce the 2024 Municipal Budget

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

Motion carried 3-1-0.

Ayes: Carr, Mayor Henley, Wright

Naye: Burkley

Abstain: none

Committeewoman Burkley stated she was told to ask questions in front of the audience. She stated that the information was not gone over before. She asked about the Construction Department line item for salaries and wages and was curious about the increase in the line item.

Ms. Gibson stated that there were a few employees who were paid from the salaries and wages line item: the Construction Official, Technical Assistant, another clerical employee and the inspectors. She also stated that the Construction Official and Technical Assistant were both union employees who had a step increase, and that there was an anticipated promotion for one of the employees.

Ms. Burkley asked if vision insurance was not available to the employees. Ms. Gibson confirmed it was provided but may not be broken out as an individual line item in the budget. The line item hasn't been present for several budget cycles, but it may be grouped in with another line item as it is paid out of operating expenses.

Ms. Burkley then commented that the fire hydrant service increased by twenty-five percent. She asked if the increase was confirmed by the State. Ms. Gibson stated that the increase was provided by the Finance Director, as he is aware of the billing.

She stated that there was a large increase in Public Works, and she feels that the percentage was too high. She stated that the schools are increasing by two percent, and if other entities increase, the taxes will increase by ten percent. She stated she is concerned, and that the Township needs to budget for what is needed and not what is wanted. She stated she would like to see what was budgeted and spent in 2023 for a comparison.

She then asked about the revenue for Municipal Court. Ms. Gibson confirmed that court revenue is decreasing because of bail reform. Mayor Henley stated that court revenue has been decreasing for a few years since bail reform was introduced.

Ms. Burkley then discussed the miscellaneous revenues and that there was no anticipated revenue for several line items. Ms. Gibson confirmed that if the Township was notified before the budget was introduced, they would appear on the budget. Since they were not, they will be added later as a Chapter 159.

Ms. Burkley then asked about the Hainesport shared service revenue and if it could be added. Ms. Gibson confirmed that the Auditor created the revenues page, and that it wouldn't affect much for the municipal budget that it's not on the anticipated breakdown. Ms. Burkley was concerned that the missing revenue would help offset the budget. Ms. Gibson then reconfirmed that every penny on the municipal budget was worth one hundred and twenty thousand dollars, and in order for the budget increase to be reduced, at least that amount would need to be generated in a revenue source.

Mayor Henley asked if Ms. Burkley had any ideas of where to cut the budget. Ms. Burkley stated that she didn't know what is and what is not needed but would like to see it cut so the taxes aren't raised six and a half cents.

Mayor Henley stated that if the Committee wants to cut, then they need to come up with a plan. He stated that the town wants to save the open space, but there is no construction revenue to offset the taxes. He stated that the majority of the budget was salaries, and if

there is no revenue generated that the taxes need to increase to maintain the township. He also noted that some of the retired salaries were replaced with shared services at a lower cost. He stated that any employee that has replaced a retiree has come in entry level and grown into the position, and that was the plan to help keep the tax rate low. He stated that something has to be done to create more revenue to help offset the taxes.

Ms. Burkley asked if there was anticipation of new taxes from the apartments and townhomes. Mayor Henley stated that there will be around four hundred thousand dollars in new tax revenue next year, which will compound as the buildings are completed. He stated that there needs to be a plan, which will help keep the employees working for the town.

Ms. Burkley stated she emailed the Administrator about suggestions for personnel, specifically in the Administration and Court departments. Mayor Henley stated that he was aware of one individual that she inquired, but she would need to speak to that employee's supervisor. He also stated that he believed it would be very irresponsible to hire an individual for three months and then let them go, as it would affect their family, or that they could have left a job. He stated that he checks with the supervisors to ensure that employees are doing the job for which they were hired. He stated that the shared services are utilized as much as they can be and that the plan is to come up with a way to make more income responsibly and continue to make it comfortable for the residents to live here.

Ms. Gibson commented that the budget process is a year-long process, and that as soon as the budget is passed, she begins working on the next year's budget. She stated she works with the Department heads to make sure they submit conservative budget requests. This year's budget is working with extremely high interest rates, which is driving up all of the costs.

Mayor Henley stated that we need to learn from the mistakes of the past, and that a succession plan is important to be able to establish the ways of the town. He stated that by streamlining payroll services, there was a savings of at least forty thousand dollars. He reiterated that the plan going forward was to continue to make the residents comfortable, keep the ways of the town, keep the employees, and create a happy working environment.

Ms. Burkley stated she had questions because many of the budget items were grouped together. Mayor Henley stated that he understood her confusion and did not disagree.

Ms. Burkley asked if one of the Ordinances was skipped, but Mayor Henley confirmed that it was tabled due to not having information from the Finance Director.

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. 54-24 Resolution Authorizing State Contract Purchase Fire Vehicle
- b. 55-24 Resolution Authorizing RCASA Municipal Alliance
- c. 56-24 Resolution Appointing Deputy Municipal Court Administrator
- d. 57-24 Resolution Appointing Full Time Patrolman Hurff
- e. 58-24 Resolution Appointing Full Time Patrolman Lally
- f. 59-24 Resolution Appointing Full Time Patrolman Sweeney
- g. 60-24 Resolution Appointing Full Time Patrolman Whitehouse
- h. 61-24 Resolution Accepting 2024 Distracted Driving Crackdown NJDHTS Grant
- i. 62-24 Resolution Approving Refunds for Totally Disabled Veteran

Motion to approve was made by Mr. Carr; seconded by Mayor Henley.

Motion carried 4-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mayor Henley, Wright

Naye: none

Abstain: none

Ms. Burkley commented on Resolution number 54-24. She wanted to provide a transparency explanation on the purchase of a fire vehicle. She stated that the reason for the purchase was for the safety of Fire Chief's health, so he would not inhale the fumes from his gear. She stated she did not wish anyone to have cancer due to serving the town. She stated that the Chief's current vehicle could be handed to another department as it could still be used. She stated that she didn't care what it costs as his health is paramount.

She then stated that she was concerned about the interest rate paid on the truck, stating that it was twenty-two percent. She stated that if it was paid off during a longer amount of time, there would be a higher interest rate.

Mayor Henley was confused and asked about the interest rates she was referring to.

Mayor Henley asked Lieutenant Knott to clarify the purchase of the vehicle and to check with the Chief for confirmation on the percentage rate.

Committeeman Carr asked where she was getting the information from as it was not on the contract for the vehicle, and she stated that it was her math.

Solicitor Bob Wright confirmed that Ms. Burkley's math was incorrect, stating that the percentage rate was substantially less than what she came up with. He also stated that the purchase was through a State contract, and the Township does not have the ability to negotiate the cost.

Ms. Burkley stated that she was in favor of spending whatever is needed to keep the employees cancer free and healthy.

Open Meeting for Public Comment:

Christopher Hamilton, 16 St. Andrews Court, stated he was also the President of the Westampton Township School Board, thanked the township for taking down the hockey rink at the Holly Hills school, and that the area looks much better.

Mr. Carr motioned to close public comment.

All in favor to close public comment.

Dates to Remember:

Next Township Committee Meeting April 16th@ 7PM, Land Development Board Meeting April 3rd @7PM, Historic Commission April 24th @ 7PM, Recreation Committee Meeting April 10th @7PM, Take Your Child to Work Day April 25th.

Executive Session:

- a. Resolution No. 04.02.2024 - Resolution Authorizing the Township Committee and Support Staff to Meet in Private Session and Authorizing the Exclusion of the Public From that Portion of the Meeting Dealing with Specific Issues Requiring Non-Public Discussions: Attorney-Client Privilege – Contract Negotiation.

Motion to enter Executive Session made by Mr. Carr; seconded by Ms. Burkley.

Motion carried 4-0.

Ayes: Burkley, Carr, Mayor Henley, Wright

Naye: none

Abstain: none

Meeting adjourned at 7:33 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Gibson, Municipal Clerk