

WESTAMPTON TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

6:00 PM CLOSED SESSION 7:00 PM REGULAR MEETING

February 16, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM with all present.

Resolution 2-16-16 was adopted to go into Executive session to discuss personnel, contracts and potential litigation.

The meeting was again called to order and reopened at 7:06 PM by Mayor Daniels. Requirements of the Sunshine Law were read. This meeting was advertised in the Burlington County Times on January 14, 2016. The flag was saluted and there was a moment of silence. Mayor Daniels commented that a dear friend and colleague passed away, Councilwoman Diane of Stinney of Pemberton Township.

Roll Call:

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| Committeewoman Chang | Present |
| Committeeman Lopez | Present |
| Committeewoman Smith-Hartman | Present |
| Committeewoman Teleisa | Present |
| Mayor Daniels | Present |

Al Marmero, Solicitor, was present.

Donna Ryan, Clerk/Administrator and Marion Karp, Deputy Clerk were present.

Approve 2/16/16 Agenda – motion to approve by Ms. Chang; second by Ms. Teleisa. All voted yes.

Closed Session Meeting Minutes 2/1/2016 – motion to approve by Ms. Chang; second by Ms. Teleisa. All voted yes.

Regular Meeting Minutes 2/1/16 – motion to approve by Ms. Chang; second by Ms. Teleisa. All voted yes.

Scheduled Appointments

7:00 PM – Budget Overview for the Public. Mayor Daniels went to Trenton this afternoon to see the budget presentation given by the NJ Governor. The Committee spoke about making the public a part of the process; essentially where we are at is a budget that needs \$325,000 in cuts. It is an increase from last year's budget; he is asking each person to understand that we have some capital expenditures where debt payment has come due – \$585,000 is due in June. There are few things that the Committee has control over; some are not under their control such as pension payments, health care, trash collection, landfill disposal fees, insurance, fire hydrant service and fuel amongst

other things. He spoke regarding the tax levy cap – there are exceptions to this, including health, pension, debt service and capital expenditures.

He let the audience know that Committeewoman Chang has a previous commitment and may have to leave a bit early this evening. He asked Mr. Lopez to prepare a PowerPoint budget presentation tonight.

Mr. Lopez – thanks to the Committee who entrusted him in putting this together; Donna Ryan and Bob Hudnell have really done all the work. The goal of this evening's meeting is to listen to the residents; the Committee wants to know what their priorities and thoughts are and what can they do better as Township officials.

The budget information will be uploaded onto the Township website tomorrow; copies are also available at the Clerk's office. Last year's budget was \$10,499,382, this year it increases to \$10,918,885.63. This proposed budget doesn't include \$319,060 in cuts have already been secured. They are hard cuts for every department to make. This increase is \$419,503.00 more than in 2015. There are some costs that are really a burden to taxpayers – pension costs, healthcare costs. The Committee has no control over these items. In 2016 the Township is paying over 1 million dollars in healthcare costs. Debt service has increased; our BANS were consolidated and they payment is large. It has increased 211% since last year.

Employee salaries have also increased (\$126,000); most are contractual in nature. Township debt is \$4,469,000 in total. Total open space debt is \$2,358,841.00 which includes the sports complex and land we have acquired, etc. This proposed 4.9 cent tax increase in the tax rate would amount to a yearly increase of \$118.72 for the average assessed home in Westampton which is \$242,271.00.

Ratables have increased approximately 9 million dollars; Virtua didn't file for farmland assessment and they are paying the full taxes on the land that they now own according to Donna Ryan. The proposed 4.9 cent tax increase would be within the 2% tax cap levy.

There are 3 ways to reduce the tax increase: reduction or elimination of services; a reduction in force or take a more aggressive approach in smart development to increase ratables.

The Committee has been working on developing a 5 to 10 year strategic plan for the town. They want to continue to identify areas where we can cut costs and stabilize taxes. It is a goal to implement the use of multi-year budget forecasting to prepare for increased costs.

Mr. Daniels thanked Mr. Lopez for putting the presentation together; he thanked Donna again for her efforts with the budget. Police incidents and EMS calls have increased; we have very busy departments. We all enjoy our Township services such as chipping and leaf collection and mowing of open areas. Trash collection cost each homeowner approximately \$139/year. He believes we are a fiscally responsible town; generally

speaking we have one person offices. When one person goes to lunch; others have to cover other offices.

Vernita Jones – wondered what the Committee considers to be smart development.

Robert Davies – asked about how much the trash collection cost was; was it per week or per year.

Mike Eaton – understands budgets, knows that there are certain costs that are negotiable in contracts. He hasn't gotten a 5% raise in 6 years; he knows the Committee has negotiated contracts for much more than this. These are things that can be controlled by the Committee to reduce taxes; they represent the residents and aren't advocated for the employees.

Garfield Harper – has lived here for 33 years; people have themselves to blame. When ratables have tried to come into this town, they don't want them and turn them away. The only way to save this town is to take a look at these ratables. There is no other way to get taxes down; without them the taxes will keep going up. The Ikea building was a great ratable that would have helped this Township. There is no way you can see or hear anything from Rancocas Park from within Rancocas Village.

Anthony D'Errico - clarified some budget figures. You can do better on healthcare if you shop around; there should be some alternatives. The debt service is due to poor planning; there may be better deals out there if we shop around. He asked if we are making money on the Sports Complex; Donna said we still owe some on it; we are making some money. He wants to know why we are purchasing homes if we have a budget shortfall. He knows we get federal funds for hiring EMTS but they are transitory; eventually we will have to absorb these costs.

Machell Pettis – has lived here for 48 years; this administration has nothing to do with the bonds; it was prior administrations. She thinks the Township is doing a great job.

Roger Roslowski – we have a lot of distressed business properties in the town. We should be looking for businesses to fill these. We need to look at ways to bring businesses in. Hopefully the strategic plan will look to form some kind of a committee. With Virtua coming in it will attract more businesses into town. It's always easy to attack Township employees, they are an easy target but he urges the committee not to do this.

Roger Randall – asked how much in ratables we lose for having all the County buildings in our Township. He thinks it is unfair for the County to dump all this on us. Maybe if the County could reduce what we pay them in taxes it might make a difference.

Mr. Daniels stated that they all agree with Mr. Randall on this; County facilities take up a sizable footprint in our Township and use our resources as far as Police and EMS. We

have a good relationship with the County and have received some sizable grants from them.

Elyse (last name unintelligible) – asked about the increase in services provided by EMS and Police. From the year 2008 to 2015 the Police salaries experienced a 5.2 percent increase. EMS salaries increased 90% during this same period. Mr. Lopez says they need to be more forward looking and develop strategic planning.

Garfield Harper – told Mayor Chang that she did the right thing with the hospital even though they don't see eye to eye. It will attract businesses even if they are nonprofit.

Mr. Daniels – smart growth is having something to look forward to. Ikea would have been a wonderful thing for this Township. Mr. Lopez thinks that smart growth is what people want to see developed in their community; he thinks we lack a sense of identity in the Township. We need a town center where we can have community events. Feel free to look at the Township Vision Plan on the website. It is the Committee's job to bring projects that reflect good revenue to the residents.

Russ Hansel – it is his experience that the town tonight feels it is in a sense of panic. Part of the plan should be what the vision for this town is. He doesn't remember being invited to take part in this process. He wants to know what success will look like in relationship to that vision. He doesn't think that cutting is the way to fix the Township; the answer lies in strategic planning. Has there been discussion about what the town can do to attract businesses. He believes that at the end of the day Virtua being here will certainly generate some dollars for our community. He thinks the hospitals will be paying some sort of a fee in lieu of property taxes. He loves seeing kids playing at the fields but what is the benefit to the Township. The tax increase is absolutely unsustainable for seniors over a ten year period.

Roger Randall – wants to know what the increase would be to our local taxes. The total proposed increase at this time is 4.9 cents; this is just for Westampton and doesn't include the County or the schools. Government has to reflect the situation of the people; this is why people are leaving NJ in droves. We need to take care of our people.

Mr. Lee – is a great advocate of strategic planning; people don't plan to fail, people fail to plan. He thinks the hospital and the luxury apartments are planning for the future. If the Committee revisits the PILOT program, it could work with some modifications. He hasn't heard anything tonight that is any better than that.

Pete Kraft – walks around his neighborhood and sees a lot of foreclosed houses; he sees a potential in income for those not paying their taxes. They are falling apart and making the neighborhood go downhill. Ms. Smith-Hartman commented that with these abandoned houses a lot of times the banks are paying the taxes. She is not saying that they are taking care of the houses, but the taxes are paid. Ms. Chang stated that about a year and a half ago we hosted a seminar here regarding how to deal with abandoned properties; she would like to bring them back. They had some suggestions we might be

able to use. Mr. Lopez agrees with Ms. Chang; there are those in town that don't follow the Township Codes and ordinances. We don't have anyone to enforce these codes in the town.

Mr. Milanese – the Committee is doing a good job of working together. Thank you for doing a good job.

Lori Hustus – has a concern about the PILOT program; she doesn't mind that it is low income; she is concerned about what will happen to our schools. Mr. Daniels stated that it is a concern with all of them as well.

Jacqueline Eckert – good job with the budget presentation. She heard a lot of good comments this evening; she wants to know what she as a resident can do. How can we stimulate the economy? You buy locally.

Ms. Chang – part of bringing Virtua in was the discussion of a town center on Route 541. They have agreed to be a part of this and it was part of the preliminary conversation.

Vincent Knott – wants the Committee to elaborate on the \$300,000 in cuts that have been made already. As far as EMS there were reductions in per diem employees and overtime; retirement of employees; supplies, uniforms and vehicle maintenance were some of the areas where cuts were made. For police, there were cutbacks in a patrol car purchase; also a cutback in SLEO salary.

Mr. Lopez – explained that the large increase in EMS salaries from 2008 to 2015 was due to a transition from a volunteer squad to a career squad.

Mr. Daniels – in 2015 the Township recouped 47% of EMS salaries due to third party ambulance runs.

Public Comments on Agenda Items

Anthony D'Errico – asked why we were buying Block 604, Lot 16. We are buying it for \$45,000 and it is currently in foreclosure. It is a two acre parcel. He thinks we need to stop doing this; it doesn't make sense. We already have a huge amount in Open Space debt service.

Mr. Lopez – it is a special area; it is adjacent to Timbuctoo.

Anthony D'Errico – Virtua has dangled a carrot; there is no guarantee they will build the second phase which is supposed to be all ratables.

New Business

- a. Police Report – no further comments made.

- b. EMS/Fire Report – told the Committee how their calls have increased in volume 25% over the last 3 years. Every time an ambulance leaves Westampton we are receiving revenue back. They bring back 47% of their budget back this way. The 90% increase was necessary; they have full time, part time and volunteers. You won't find a department with paid staff and volunteers that get along so well with each other. Our Township is rated on fire risk; our ISO rating is a 3 which reduces the cost of resident's fire insurance. They consolidated the Fire Official's office this year. Each call costs approximately \$162 as compared to about \$1000 for other towns. Volunteering is a dying thing; they last maybe 3-5 years maximum.
- c. Fire Official's Report – no further comments made.
- d. Public Works Report – no further comments made.

Resolutions

19-16 Payment of Vouchers – motion to approve by Mr. Lopez; seconded by Ms. Smith-Hartman. All voted yes.

Ordinances

1-2016 Amend Code of the Township, Chapter 117, Prohibited Conduct (first reading) – motion to approve by Ms. Teleisa; seconded by Ms. Smith-Hartman. All voted yes. Al Marmero explained our prosecutor has been using this frequently; the State allows a higher fine amount; this could be a revenue generator for the Township so we drafted an ordinance to allow for the State maximum fine.

2-2016 Authorize Purchase of Property, Block 604, Lot 16 (first reading) – motion to approve by Mr. Lopez; seconded by Ms. Teleisa. All voted yes. Mr. Lopez is hoping everyone has visited the site. Everyone should take a moment to read the headstones in the cemetery. He now understands the historical context and the vision of the Timbuctoo site. He looks forward to a more proactive relationship with the Timbuctoo Committee.

Correspondence

- a. Burlington County Community Development Block Grant Program 2016
- b. Willingboro MUA, 2016 Schedule of Board Meetings
- c. Burlco JIF, 2015 Safety Incentive Program Awards
- d. NJ American Water – public hearings for rate adjustments

Dates to Remember

Budget meetings – 2/22/16 @ 5:30 PM, 2/29/16 @ 8 PM (if needed), Municipal Building
JIF Elected Officials Seminar – 3/1/2016 @ 5:30 PM, O'Connor's Restaurant,

Eastampton

2/27/16 – Burlington County Lyceum, High Street, Mount Holly, History of Timbuctoo
program 1 PM – 3 PM

Open to public Comment

Mary Weston – Timbuctoo is a very passionate subject for her; it used to be somewhat of a dump site. She is grateful to the Committee for their support in doing something positive at Timbuctoo.

Robert Davies – spoke regarding Virtua. He was not happy with the fact that the LDB had approved their General Development Plan.

Mike Eaton – had called the Township regarding trash removal and said he never received a call back. He wants to see more communication.

Ms. Smith-Hartman – is looking into a new website that will give more information.

Vernita Jones – brought up Solicitor Al Marmero and the pending charges again. Mr. Daniels said we are very happy with his services thus far and won't discuss it any further at this time. The Township will be sponsoring a student for Boys State.

Comments – Department Heads & Professionals

No further comments were made.

Committee Members Comments

There were no further comments and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Marion Karp, Deputy Clerk