

WESTAMPTON TOWNSHIP

6:00 PM SPECIAL MEETING

APRIL 14, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Mayor Carolyn Chang. Requirements of the Sunshine Law were read. This meeting was advertised in the Burlington County Times April 11, 2014. The flag was saluted and there was a moment of silence.

Roll Call:

Committeeman Daniels	Present
Committeeman Maybury	Present
Committeewoman Teleisa	Present
Committeeman Thorpe	Present
Mayor Chang	Present

Donna Ryan, Clerk/Administrator was present.

New Business

Amendment to 2014 Budget, Public Hearing – no comments from the public.

Resolutions

59-14 Adoption of the 2013 Budget. Motion by Committeeman Maybury, second by Committeeman Thorpe. All voted yes.

Comments

Committeeman Thorpe – the Township Committee and all departments worked hard to keep Westampton running and moving forward. There are no cuts to services. No resident wants to pay more in taxes, but he can find no one who wants to cut a service. As a resident, he doesn't want to cut services and have to haul his own trash to the dump. Cutting services is easy, providing services is hard.

Committeewoman Teleisa – the 2014 budget and its increase was not taken lightly. Many hours were spent asking questions, researching and asking more questions. This is a bare minimum budget without cutting services. She voted yes but it was not an easy decision. All members of the Township Committee felt boxed in a corner by previous administrations. Problems were not caused intentionally and she believes each former Committee acted for the good of the Township at the time they adopted their budgets. But between 2004 and 2012, \$4,000,000 was deferred in school taxes. This can't continue, the end amount that can be deferred is fixed. The previous Committees did not

look to the future to see the impact of the practice. Now we have come to the end of the ability to defer taxes. This Committee recognizes the financial impact of this practice and will handle it. They will put the township on a good track financially. Taxes affect every member of the Committee. As a resident, she's not happy with raising taxes, but this Committee will look for what's good for the township.

Committeeman Daniels – thanked his colleagues and the Township leadership for the hard work in producing a budget. Everyone would like a zero increase or a little bit back. The township has maintained a position of having taxes slightly lower than average in comparison to the 40 municipalities in Burlington County. The Township has responded to the economic downturn and remained a good value for residents. If we were to take this budget to a zero increase, it would mean cutting around \$220,000. With such a lean budget, the only place to cut would be personnel. To arrive at \$220,000 this would mean the layoff of three employees. The only departments with more than 2 employees are Court, Public Works, EMS and Police. In Court we have taken on Eastampton and Hainesport to help support our budget expenses. If we were to layoff in Public Works, it would mean a cut in services. To layoff in EMS, it would mean someone else would have to be found to answer our calls.

He thanked the two attendees in the audience. He was disheartened that there were only a small number of people interested enough to come to meetings and offer suggestions. If we had made layoffs and cut services, he had no doubt our meeting room would be filled with unhappy residents. The residents would be hurt directly by any cuts we could make. This budget is reasonable and responsible.

Committeeman Maybury – he is proud of the township and the services we provide. No one wants to raise taxes but it is unrealistic to think that we can keep services and lower taxes. In our own homes things cost more and we make choices to keep cable, lower the heat and do whatever we need to save money. But the township doesn't have it that easy. Each line item of the budget is lean. Our costs from the state keep increasing each year. Our pension contributions have gone from zero when he came on the committee to over \$500,000 now. There was a small reduction in our contribution this year, and this is the amendment we approved and the small savings we were able to pass on from our original, introduced budget. In 2010, the state started taking money from the townships and this resulted in layoffs and furloughs. The county boasts that it can cut costs, but that means they have excess to cut. Our budget is so lean; we have nowhere to cut except personnel. We don't have any fat in our budget.

Mayor Chang – thanked the Committee and Administrator for working extremely hard this year. In the years she's been on Committee, she has never seen the Township Committee work so hard on the budget. She took time to look at what surrounding communities were doing with their budgets, to make sure we were on track. Burlington Township was increasing their budget by 1.3 cents. Delanco's budget passed a \$55

increase to the average homeowner. Hainesport passed on a \$41 increase to the average homeowner. Burlington City had a 6 cent tax increase. All the reasons were the same – lost tax appeals, lost ratables, loss revenue. . Residents and businesses have a right to appeal their taxes, and these appeals come out of the economy crashing. All out of the control of the Governing bodies. It is easy to say cut taxes – cut services and lay off employees. But these employees are people who have served for many years. It is not easy to cut your workers out. We have done the best we could to keep our services and employees intact.

There were no further comments and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Ryan, Clerk/Administrator