

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COMMITTEE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF
WANTAGE, HELD AT THE WANTAGE TOWNSHIP BUILDING, 888 STATE ROUTE 23, WANTAGE,
NJ, HELD AT 4:00 P.M. ON
February 15, 2018**

Mayor Gaechter called the meeting to order, and requested that the Clerk call the roll. Upon roll call, the following members of the governing body were present: Committeeman Ronald Bassani, Committeeman Jonathan Morris, and Mayor William Gaechter. Also present: Administrator/ Clerk Debra Millikin and Michelle LaStarza Chief Financial Officer.

Mayor Gaechter stated, "This meeting is being held in compliance with the provisions of the Open Public Meeting Act, P.L. 1975, Chapter 231. It has been properly noticed and certified by the Clerk."

Mayor Gaechter invited all those in attendance to join in the Salute of the Flag.

BUDGET 2017

Mrs. Millikin introduced Thomas Ferry, the Township Auditor from Ferrailoli, Wielkotz, Cerullo & Cuva, P.A. Mr. Ferry gave a brief over view of the Township's financial status and utilization of fund balance. He advised that fund balance should be 10% of the total levy including both School and County Tax. Wantage would be about \$3,000,000. This is a very high level but it allows the Township some flexibility for payment of bills and allows you to pay cash for items. His recommendation is to stay at the level that you bring in each year. Mr. Ferry then discussed the Township financial standing including the payment of debt and the fact that the Township does not got out for long term financing. Mr. Ferry also indicated that state aid should come in around the same as last year.

Mr. Ferry discussed the tax calculation rate for 2017 was 98.7% which is the highest in the last three years. Mr. Ferry indicated that in discussing this with Mrs. Millikin and Ms. LaStarza this is due to the prepayment of taxes based on the Trump tax changes. Mayor Gaechter questioned the tax collection rate is only increasing due to the payments being brought up to date. Mr. Ferry stated any prepayment goes towards 2018. Yes, it was based on payments of taxes being brought up to current. Discussion ensued on this matter. Mr. Ferry stated 1 tax point is \$120,00. The average house in Wantage is \$261,116.00 is the average assessed value. On that house the amount for just municipal in 2017 was \$767.00. This year based on the budget presented is \$768.00. The 2018 budget is flat. Mr. Ferry also touched on the levy cap calculation.

Mr. Morris questioned financing on debt for purchasing of equipment. Mr. Ferry stated if the budget can take a hit and pay off over a 10-year plan this is better based on the interest rate. The Committee thanked Mr. Ferry for his presentation.

Mr. Millikin indicated the proposed budget as presented this afternoon is flat. In order to keep the budget flat a total of \$690,000 of fund balance is required to be utilized. She also advised that Open Space is proposed to stay at \$.005.

Mayor Gaechter questioned what the huge hit is for the use of surplus. The question about the \$1,000,000 increased. Ms. Lastarza indicated this is because of the open space bond acquisition of the two parcels in the amount of \$555,000 and \$344,500.

Mrs. Millikin asked if there are any questions on general revenue. One of the items not listed as part of general revenue is the property maintenance fee collected. This is classified as miscellaneous revenues not anticipated (MRNA).

Mrs. Millikin moved on to discussion of salaries. There is a 2% across the board raise for all non-union employees. As a reminder the White-Collar Union has dissolved so they are part of non-union. There was an increase in my budget for salary and wage is due to Nancy VanHorn moving into my budget since she is working for me now. Mrs. LaStarza advised that Andover has been added into the Tax Collection thus why not a total reduction.

Mrs. Millikin then moved to salary of streets and roads. Currently Blue Collar is in active negotiation. She is recommending a salary increase for Mark Little. As well as two more employees one coming on now and one at half year from now. The first position would be to get a mechanic/labor who can assist John Card and train under John. The cost would be based off of the base salary established for a laborer. The other item included in Streets and Roads would be proposing a stipend for Snow Storm Stipend as oppose to comp-time accumulation. At this point not being compensated for this use.

Mrs. Millikin moved to building and grounds and an increase for John Card. He saves the Township a ton of money by all the maintenance he provides. She is requesting an increase for him in the amount of \$5,000. The additional \$2,000 is for John Dennis to come in and do some maintenance. Mrs. Millikin is hoping to keep John Card on for at least a couple of years.

Mrs. Millikin moved to salary and wage for court that at half a year based on all the number of cases will increase to about 1,600 with Branchville coming on board I would like to make a full-time Deputy Court Administrator. Discussion ensued regarding the shared service the Township will be bring in related to Wantage.

Mayor Gaechter questioned with Animal Control since Newton did not resign can the salary be lowered due to overtime. Ms. Lastarza stated she will keep flat based on Newton not renewing the contract.

Mrs. Millikin moved on to the Operation and Expense budget. The first item is computer service from \$36,000 to \$38,000 with the purchase of iPad for the 3 Committee Members, Ms. Lastarza, and myself. Legal services and cost increased with the employee handbook upgrade including the employee evaluations. Also, open litigation with American Salt and the potential with When Pigs Fly case. Group Insurance increase is for the 2 ½ new employees if approved. Also working with Vozza Agency to put a better plan together. Mrs. Millikin also stated the PEOSHA and OSHA have been combined together. Vehicle Maintenance and repair: includes the pumper service required on a yearly basis. Today just received the information regarding the pumper service repairs based on the testing with a cost estimate of \$26,000. John Card and I will be reviewing this estimate and see if everything needs to be completed. Discussion ensued regarding the pump testing requirements. Mr. Bassani questioned reaching out to insurance to find

out what the Township is required to complete related to the trucks. Mayor Gaechter questioned the increase in the parks. Ms. Lastarza indicated this is because of the cost for the engineer reports for Lake Neepaulin Dam, as well as treatment for the lake. The final change is breaking out from court the Public Defender and Prosecutor Salary.

Mrs. Millikin advised that the debt service payment is being included based on the requirements. Mr. Bassani questioned the \$350,000 for oil stone roads. Mrs. Millikin indicated this will be discussed at the next meeting.

Mrs. Millikin moved to capital budget. The Roads proposed are based off of Harold Pellow's Memo and will be discussed on Tuesday. Discussion ensued on the various road projects. OEM is requesting a new command vehicle. Mrs. Millikin will supply the vehicle inventory list that John Card assisting in updated. Mrs. Millikin did advise that Mr. Morris questioned the use of the command vehicle for the First Aid Squad. Mrs. Millikin stated this is being utilized at this point by the First Aid Squad. Oil and Stone list will be provided by Bob Wagner at the meeting on Tuesday. New sliding doors for the storage garage. A new dog pound vehicle is proposed versus a van. A new DPW pick-up truck to replace the existing truck. John Card is requesting the upgrade of Truck #13 with fork lift. Fire Department is requesting the continuation of the hose replacement, Sussex radios, and washer for turnout gear. Recreation is proposing gates for the park, replace rusted fence, and repair the boat launch at Lake Neepaulin.

Mrs. Millikin provided the schedule of all departments coming in on Tuesday, February 20th.

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION

None

Mayor Gaechter asked for a Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion by Mr. Bassani. Second by Mr. Morris.

Ayes: Bassani, Morris, Gaechter Nays: None Absent: None Abstain: None

The meeting adjourned at 5:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Debra Millikin, Acting Municipal Clerk