

**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 3:00 P.M. ON  
FEBRUARY 11, 2019**

Mayor Bassani called the special meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and requested that the Clerk call the roll. Upon roll call, the following members of the governing body were present: Mayor Ronald Bassani, Deputy Mayor Jonathan Morris and Committeeman William Gaechter. Also, present: Administrator/Clerk Debra Millikin and Michelle LaStarza, CFO by phone conference

Mayor Bassani 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."

**BUDGET 2019**

Mrs. Millikin advised that the Division of Local Government Services under Local Finance Notice 2018-28 states the budget is to be introduced by February 10<sup>th</sup>, but an extension has been provided to March 29<sup>th</sup> and Adoption is typically March 20<sup>th</sup> but the revised date is April 30<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Millikin advised that the proposed budget as presented is an increase of \$27.85 on an averaged assessed home. The tax rate will go from \$.294 to \$.305 as presented today. As part of the budget the Township is utilizing \$500,000 in surplus leaving the remainder of \$418,481. Open space is proposing to stay at \$.005.

Mrs. Millikin began going page by page starting on general revenue. Ms. LaStarza indicated that the Township is limited based on what the Township took in last year. Mrs. Millikin also advised that the Franklin Borough shared service for Tax Collection is reflected in the budget for 2019. Mr. Gaechter stated the tax increase is about \$140,000 increase by total amount to be raised by taxation. Mr. Gaechter stated that the Reserve for Uncollected Taxes was \$71,000 of the \$140,000 increase is safe to say this is the reason for the \$140,000 increase. Mr. Gaechter stated this was predicted last year based on the amount of the prepaid taxes received last year.

Mrs. Millikin moved onto the surplus showing the surplus was less for 2018 versus 2017. Only utilizing 8% of the surplus to be as conservative as possible. Discussion ensued on this matter and Ms. LaStarza indicated that could go up to 9%, however, this did not come in last year. Mrs. Millikin advised the reason the amount was higher for 2017 was due to the last-minute payments the Township received for taxes. This was the impact on surplus.

Mr. Gaechter stated the surplus is less and an increase in reserve for uncollected taxes. Mrs. Millikin stated in 2015 there was an increase which was .274 to .295 which was a \$55.00 increase per average household. Mr. Gaechter stated still way below the 2% CAP. Ms. LaStarza stated yes.

Mrs. Millikin advised starting on Salary & Wage originally had the implementation of the merit raise system, however, this was not feasible in the budget for 2019 so there is straight 2% across the board for everyone including the union at this time. Mrs. Millikin did indicate

that John Card may retire in the next year a half year starting from July to December is accounted for a new employee for mechanic of \$30,000. The only other item was an increase for the judge under the court line item. Mr. Gaechter request that something be provided showing what was spent for 2018 based on the final budget and the balance of those accounts. Ms. LaStarza stated she would create a sheet on the salary and O&E budget for 2018 on what was spent and budgeted. Discussion ensued on this matter. Mrs. Millikin also advised that there is a proposal of an additional employee for Melissa on a part-time basis for \$13,000 which will come out of the share service for tax collection shared service for Franklin Borough. The Township would still be making about \$7,000 on the shared service.

Mrs. Millikin moved on to the O&E Budget. She stated she would show what has been cut. The first item cut was computer services. Legal this was cut because this went up last year because of the employee handbook. Now that this is complete this line item was reduced. Mrs. Millikin directed the Committee to aid to fire department adjoining municipalities added an extra \$2,000 for Minisink Fire Department per the request by the Chief. Discussion ensued regarding this page of information. Mrs. Millikin moved on to the next page and the municipal court prosecutor and was reduced down based on the cost for the RFPs. Construction Official shared service Mrs. Millikin advised always budget about \$30,000. Mrs. Millikin advised that the only cost that comes out of the this is about \$1,500 for the Mitchell Humphrey Systems. This is why the amount was dropped to \$5,000. LOSAP the amount budgeted included the CPI increase. The 9-1-1 is still at \$55,000 but she advised this contract is up at the end of the year.

Mr. Gaechter questioned the main reason for the increase is because of the bond notes. Mrs. Millikin stated that the interest rate went up on those notes this year to 3.5%.

Mrs. Millikin moved on to the Capital Budget for 2019. She advised she provided the Committee Members copies of the memo from Harold Pellow regarding the roads for 2019, DPW memo for oil and stone roads for 2019, building and grounds memo for 2019, fire department memo from both Wantage and Sussex Borough and Recreation and Parks memo for 2019. Mrs. Millikin advised that per Harold Pellow's memo the roads proposed are Coykendall Road section 1, Ryan Road, Layton Road and a road in Lake Neepaulin. She advised that the Lewisburg Road project was cut. Mrs. Millikin advised that she believes Lake Neepaulin might be Red Oak.

Mrs. Millikin moved over to oil and stone and the roads being proposed are: Skytop, Crigger, Rose Morrow, 3 sides of Gemmer, Snover, Brown, Hickory, Judgebeach, Dewitt, Roy and Goodrich. This is not being bonded. DPW is requesting a wacker roller \$16,000 and a new loader in the amount of \$190,000.

Mrs. Millikin advised that OEM is requesting a cargo bed rack/lettering. Mrs. Millikin advised the Wantage Fire Department request for hose replacement \$5,000 and Equipment upgrade \$5,000. There was also a request for a new fire truck of \$600,000 and pumper truck of \$300,000. These two have been pushed out based on the budget. She advised Sussex Fire Department requested a thermal image camera of \$10,000. Mrs. Millikin advised she has spoken with Chief Rubin and he indicated a camera can be purchased for about \$2,500.

Recreation and Parks the request is for a fence at fields #5 & 6. The path paving around Woodbourne is proposed to begin next year. Harold Pellow is working on a final cost but Mrs. Millikin has estimated about \$25,000 a year. As a reminder there is still the ask by the Football League for the field expansion of \$50,000. Mrs. Millikin asked Ms. LaStarza if she looked up the numbers in Open Space currently \$96,000 and canceling the amount for LGR which is \$173,000 total amount of \$269,000 under Open Space. Ms. LaStarza advised if the Committee wants to utilize Open Space money then it would be a fully funded ordinance.

Mayor Bassani questioned the payment of the bonds went up. Ms. LaStarza indicates it has to be raised by 1/10<sup>th</sup> each year. This is the effect that capital projects have on the budget. Ms. LaStarza advised that last year was \$5.2 million open at an interest rate of 1.29% and then this year \$5.5 million open at an interest rate of 3.5%. This is the reason why there might be a need to do permanent financing. Ms. LaStarza indicated that she can reach out to Mr. Ferry or Bonding Counsel. Discussion ensued on the interest rate.

There being not other items for discussion Mayor Bassani opened the meeting to the public. None coming forward Mayor Bassani closed this portion of the meeting.

Mayor Bassani requested a motion to adjourn. Mr. Morris made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Mr. Gaechter.

Upon Roll:

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

The special budget meeting adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra J. Millikin  
Municipal Clerk