

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND COMMITTEE OF THE TOWNSHIP
OF WANTAGE, HELD VIA VIRTUAL MEETING 7:00 P.M. ON
MAY 28, 2020**

Mayor Morris called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and requested that the Clerk call the roll. Upon roll call, the following members of the governing body were present: Mayor Morris, Deputy Mayor William Gaechter and Committeeman Ronald Bassani. Also, present: Administrator/Clerk Michael Restel, and Mr. Glenn Kienz, Esq.

Mayor Morris 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."

PRESENTATION

Dr. Scott Ripley High Point High School Superintendent presented the 2020 School Budget.

Dr. Ripley stated this Budget was a very hard budget to present and will not sugar coat it, Dr. Ripley explained there will be 14% increase on the tax levy.

Dr. Ripley explained that New Jersey cut roughly \$750,000 in state aid for 2020/2021 School year and that it will keep increasing for another 3 years.

Dr. Ripley explained the State Cuts in Aid part of a 7 year decrease in aid.

Dr. Ripley stated it cost a lot of money to upkeep a 55-year-old building and there is approximately \$669,000 set aside in Capital to replace certain item's, discussion ensued.

Dr. Ripley spoke about a pie chart that showed a representation of where the tax monies are going 70% to Salaries and Wages. Discussion ensued.

Dr. Ripley spoke about the Bank Cap used in this Budget and for many years High Point was fiscally responsible by not raising taxes. Dr. Ripley explained its very expensive to run and repair a 55-year-old building, discussion ensued.

Dr. Ripley stated High Point by statue can raise the Tax Levy by 2% each year and if you don't raise the tax levy 2% its considered banked cap, that has allowed High Point to raise it 14% due to 3 years of Banked Cap. Discussion ensued.

Dr. Ripley thanked the Mayor and Committee for allowing him to present the 2020 High Point Budget and he welcomes any questions.

Steven Edelstein Attorney from Weiner Law Group thanked Dr. Ripley and presented a few questions for Dr. Ripley to answer.

Mr. Edelstein asked Dr. Ripley if he believed the Budget was below or above Adequacy, Dr. Ripley responded the budget is well above adequacy. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Edelstein asked Dr. Ripley what is the percent each participating municipality is paying, Dr. Ripley responded it is relative to the number of students the Municipality is sending and assessed value of the property. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Edelstein spoke about the last several years the budget fluctuated. Mr. Edelstein spoke about one year the tax levy was reduced by a million, the following year it was increased by over a million the same for 2 more years, Mr. Edelstein asked why was that. Dr. Ripley explained the Board was trying to be Fiscally responsible. Dr. Ripley stated multiple staff positions were cut and monies were put into reserves. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Edelstein spoke about why bonding was never looked at for the upgrades on a 55-year-old building. Dr. Ripley stated he has been in favor on bonding but the boards prior to the current one was not. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Bassani Thanked Dr. Ripley for his presentation and asked about why bonding wasn't seriously looked at to help ease the tax payer burden. Dr. Ripley explained he was for going out to bond but was turned down by prior boards, discussion ensued.

Mr. Bassani asked Dr. Ripley to explain the banked cap, Dr. Ripley stated as per statute you can only raise the tax levy 2% if you raise it 1% the other percent goes into a Banked Cap. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Gaechter asked Dr. Ripley if any of the staff has voluntarily given back their coaching stipends. Dr Ripley stated the staff has been working with student athletes via virtual meetings to keep the students up to date. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Gaechter asked Dr. Ripley if the School has figured out how much the COVID-19 has cost the school district; Dr. Ripley stated the school has been working on the figures.

Mayor Morris thanked Dr. Ripley for his presentation and asked what the cost per student was for High Point and the state average. Dr. Ripley explained the cost per student and it is \$28,000, Dr. Ripley stated he did not know the state average off the top of his head, Dr. Ripley stated he was not happy that the cost per pupil was that high and is not proud of that. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Edelstein asked Dr. Ripley what Montague paid per student; Dr. Ripley stated \$16,675.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Morris requested a motion to approve Resolution #46-2020.

A motion was made by Mr. Gaechter and seconded by Mr. Bassani.

Upon Roll Call:

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

REPORTS:

Administrator/Clerk: Mr. Restel spoke about the deep revenue losses the State will incur for the next Fiscal Year Budget and that cuts and job losses will incur due to COVID-19

Mayors: Mayor Morris stated the annual Fishing Contest will be held Saturday July 11th at Lake Neepaulin.

Mayor Morris spoke about the County Update pertaining to COVID-19 and Wantage's positive cases remained at 51.

Mayor Morris spoke about a letter that was sent to Governor Murphy's office urging the reopening of businesses.

Mayor Morris explained new guidance will be coming out pertaining to in person graduation ceremonies.

Mayor Morris stated the Vietnam Moving Wall is still on as planned and the recent meeting was cancelled. Mayor Morris stated donations and Volunteers are deeply needed.

Mayor Morris thanked the DPW for continued work at the Berry Road Property and the town will be looking into ordering signs for the potential crosswalk.

Deputy Mayor: Mr. Gaechter stated he and his wife walked the Berry Road walking trail and it's a beautiful area to walk.

Committeeman Ron Bassani: Mr. Bassani had nothing to report.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

A motion is in order to approve the minutes of the Special Mayor and Committee Meeting May 7, 2020 and Regular Meeting May 14, 2020. A motion was made by Mr. Bassani and seconded by Mr. Gaechter.

Upon Roll Call:

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

ORDINANCE:

Introduction of Ordinance #05-2020 Ordinance to Amend the Salaries of Officers and Employees of the Township of Wantage, County of Sussex and State of New Jersey for 2020

A motion was made by Mr. Gaechter and seconded by Mr. Bassani

Upon Roll Call:

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

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION:

Kathy Gorman Fernwood: Mrs. Gorman stated her frustration pertaining to a Facebook comment posted towards herself from a township employee and the comment needs to be removed.

Mrs. Gorman spoke about a letter Sussex Borough sent out pertaining to the High Point Budget.

Wayne Dunn Ann Marie Lane: Mr. Dunn stated he voted for going out to bond for High Point repairs and also it would've helped ease the tax increase, discussion ensued.

Charlene Kimble Sherman Ridge Road: Mrs. Kimble spoke about the meeting she had with Mr. Bassani and Mr. Restel and the request for a fence Lang her property net to the Berry Road Property. Mrs. Kimble stated there has been kids trespassing at the rear of her property. Discussion ensued.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

Upon Roll:

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

Meeting Adjourned 8:37PM

Respectfully submitted by

Michael L Restel

Administrator/Acting Clerk

A motion was made by Mr. Gaechter and seconded by Mayor Morris.

Upon Roll Call:

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