

APPROVED: April 7, 2014

WEST WINDSOR TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
Budget Work Session #3
February 21, 2014

CALL TO ORDER: President Maher called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE

This is to advise that the notice requirement provided for in the "Open Public Meetings Act" has been satisfied. Notice of this meeting was properly given and transmitted to The Times and Princeton Packet; filed with the Clerk of the Municipality; and posted in the West Windsor Township Municipal Building at North Post and Clarksville Roads on February 7, 2014.

ATTENDEES: President: Maher; Vice President: Geevers; Council: Mendonez (left at 2:30 p.m.); Samonte (left at 2:35 p.m.); Township Attorney: Herbert; Business Administrator: Schmid; Chief Financial Officer: Louth; Township Deputy Clerk: Huber (left at 10:30 a.m.); Township Clerk: Young; Township Engineer: Guzik (left at 10:55 a.m.); Manager of Land Use: Surtees (left at 10:20 a.m.); Director of Community Development: Ward (left at 11:16 a.m.), Director of Senior and Social Services: Fucetola (11:16-11:55 a.m.); Health Inspector: Swanson (11:55 a.m.-12:24 p.m.); Manager of Parks and Recreation: Jacobs (10:50 a.m.-12:48 p.m.); Tax Assessor: Steve Benner (12:48-1:06 p.m.); Director of Public Works: Drummond (1:06 p.m.-2:44 p.m.); Assistant Superintendent: Taylor (1:06 p.m.-2:44 p.m.)

ABSENT: Borek

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. John Church, 11 Princeton Place, reviewed concerns about the 2013 Annual Financial Statement and spoke about the Fund Balance.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Division of Land Use

Mr. Surtees spoke about the Division of Land Use, Planning Board, Zoning Board, and SPRAB. He reviewed each of their budget requests, and reviewed revenues collected over the past two years. Mr. Surtees spoke about the Open Space Fund and the grants that have been received for the purchase of open space.

President Maher asked for a spreadsheet listing open space acquisitions and their purchase costs.

Mr. Mendonez inquired about the targeted revenue for 2014.

Mr. Surtees commented that the revenue for 2014 will be the same or exceed revenue earned in 2013.

Ms. Geevers inquired about the line item for conferences and revenues and asked if the legal fees are covered by the developers for plan review.

Mr. Surtees explained the revenue for this line item will be used for his staff, Zoning Board, and Planning Board members. He noted that the first meeting with the developer is with the in-house officials then an escrow account is set up for costs associated with plan review.

President Maher inquired about local building activity and asked if it was increasing.

Mr. Surtees agreed that construction was increasing in the Township.

Division of Engineering

Mr. Guzik spoke about the Annual Park Maintenance Program, and reviewed all the Capital Improvement programs pertaining to open space.

Ms. Geevers inquired about the status of the Princeton Junction Park and whether donations were being accepted for the plantings. She asked for a Work Session on this topic.

Ms. Ward advised that there was a meeting with both the Berrien City and Gables residents regarding the park. She noted that FOWWOS had contributed donations and the Landscape Architect was beginning to work on the project.

Ms. Geevers asked for Administration to provide the individual property plan reports.

President Maher asked for assurances that the Princeton Junction Park will not receive monies from taxpayer funds for its development or from the Annual Parks Open Space Maintenance Program. He also inquired about the improvements to Conover Park.

Ms. Samonte asked how much was in the open space reserve and how was it calculated.

Mr. Jacobs noted that there are two years left to the Conover Park lease with the County. He commented that any improvements to the park would need to be approved by the County.

Discussion ensued over Conover Park, the improvements, and the possible purchase of the property.

Mr. Guzik reviewed the details of the Annual Park Development Program.

Ms. Geevers asked how much funding was in the Recreation Trust Fund. She recommended that additional funds should be transferred into the park improvements budget.

Mr. Jacobs advised that the fees from the Recreation Trust Fund go toward the programs, and any excess is rolled over from year to year. He explained that Capital Funds are used for park improvements and the sports associations are also asked for assistance in funding the improvements.

Director of Community Development

Ms. Ward spoke about her accomplishments and outlined her 2014 goals. She advised that she interfaces with Federal, State and County organizations on setting up Township projects.

Ms. Ward addressed questions regarding High School South parking lot, construction permitting issues, train station beautification, and Route One improvements.

Ms. Geevers asked how Ms. Ward received complaints and questions for Community Development.

Ms. Ward noted that she receives information through the website, via email, by telephone, and commented on the link on the website for pothole complaints.

President Maher spoke about the need and the cost for moving utility poles at specific locations.

Ms. Ward explained that the relocating of utility poles is a function of a road project; otherwise the Township would be responsible for the full cost of the relocation.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Division of Senior and Social Services

Ms. Fucetola outlined the programs offered by the Senior Center and noted that the Center was nationally recognized as a Center operating at an elite level for the 3rd time. She noted that the Senior Center is a Township asset. Ms. Fucetola reviewed her accomplishments and 2014 goals, and provided statistics pertaining to the classes offered at the Center. She advised that the classes are evaluated for effectiveness and assists with developing future programs.

Ms. Samonte asked about the need for a Social Worker to coordinate assistance with the senior residents.

Mr. Mendonez asked why there was an increase in fees for rentals and consultants.

Ms. Fucetola explained that a Social Worker would eliminate some of the time she currently spends with the residents. She accounted for the increase in consultant fees due to the addition of teachers.

Ms. Geevers noted that revenue should offset the increase in fees. She inquired about non-residential fees and potential increase of space.

President Maher inquired about the fee schedule and whether the fees collected for 2013 cover the cost of the classes. He asked about attendance, cancellation of classes, lunch fees, and the trust fund.

Ms. Fucetola advised that non-residents pay double the cost and provided space is available in the class. She explained the fee schedule, how fees are collected, how instructors are paid, class attendance and noted that only one class was cancelled last year due to inadequate attendance.

President Maher asked about the funds budgeted for the expansion of the Senior Center. He also inquired about the purchase of windows for the Center.

Ms. Fucetola explained that an increase in participation could make necessary the expansion. She further explained that the windows are large and the cost for the windows includes the labor and required framing.

Division of Health

Ms. Swanson advised Council of the three areas within the Division of Health which are environmental health services, public health services, and health education services. She spoke about her accomplishments and her 2014 goals.

President Maher inquired about the property maintenance abatement program.

Ms. Swanson explained how the program is utilized and listed several examples of how the Division used this fund.

Ms. Geever's inquired about the grass which grows causing unsightly areas within the Township.

Ms. Swanson explained that some of the issues described by Ms. Geever's does not fall under the public health code. She gave examples of where the resident was notified of the issue and it was resolved. Ms. Swanson commented on working with the Landscape Architect for a public maintenance contract to include possible maintenance abatement.

Division of Recreation and Parks

Mr. Jacobs described the various programs the Division offered and noted that there were over 5,000 participants. He advised that his Division does not have an operating budget because the costs come out of the Recreation Trust Fund with the exception of his salary.

President Maher asked Mr. Jacobs to approach the County about the potential improvements at the Conover Field because the Township does not own the property.

President Maher suggested that there be a dialogue with the County about the purchase of the Conover Park and/or a change in the terms of the new lease.

Ms. Samonte asked for an update on the proposed cricket fields.

Mr. Jacobs spoke about the locations chosen for the fields and advised that other locations are being considered because the site is easier to develop. He commented on asking the association to assist in the costs for the development of the fields.

Ms. Geevers supports keeping most of the recreational activities in one of the Township parks. She noted that maintenance of the parks is already being done without having to add another location.

President Maher recommended making Community Park a number one option. He inquired about relative proximity to neighborhoods of both High School South, and Conover Park as it pertains to lighting of the fields. President Maher suggested amending the budget for the development of the cricket field at Community Park.

President Maher also made clear he was in favor of reducing pool fees especially for the residents.

TAX ASSESSOR

Mr. Benner advised that appeals have been reduced from 126 to 86 and added assessments are down due to reduction in construction and project completions.

Ms. Samonte asked about assessments on unimproved property across the Township.

Mr. Benner explained that with market decline, assessments were adjusted in particular neighborhoods. He noted that wholesale adjustments have not been done since 2011 and 97-98% of assessments are assessed at true value. Mr. Benner advised that the County advises the Township when to consider a revaluation. He noted that the last revaluation cost approximately \$800,000.00 and it is paid for over a five-year period.

President Maher asked when the Carnegie Center was last assessed.

Mr. Benner explained that he will wait until summer to see when the Certificates of Occupancy have been issued to determine when to reassess the building. He explained that the ratable base has declined because of a lot of factors and the base is just starting to stabilize.

President Maher inquired about the Howard Hughes Corporation property and the decrease in taxes which are being paid on it.

Mr. Benner agreed that Howard Hughes Corp. is paying a lot less in taxes because the land and buildings have been left vacant.

Discussion ensued over assessments, zoning changes, and the future prospects of the Howard Hughes property.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. Drummond spoke about keeping the Department's Capital Budget fiscally responsible, and how the fifteen snow and ice storms have affected the workload.

Road Division

Mr. Drummond outlined the details of the yard debris which has been collected, the sign replacement program, recycling and the Clean Communities program, and the recycling grant funds the Township receives.

Mr. Drummond addressed the deteriorating road conditions and potholes on the Township roads. He asked Council for an additional \$10,000 to purchase asphalt for the repairs.

Sewer Division

Mr. Drummond informed Council that the Department has increased the monitoring of the sanitary sewer lines. He spoke about facilities and open space plans for the Township and advised that increased irrigation and fertilization has increased the number of times the playing fields need to have the grass cut.

Vehicle Maintenance

Mr. Drummond reviewed the process of maintaining the Department's fleet. He spoke about repairs and the request for new equipment.

President Maher inquired about the increase in salary and wages by \$20,000.

Ms. Schmid explained that the increase was due to job reclassifications.

Ms. Geever asked for additional details from Administration.

President Maher commented that the Department cannot have a 2% cap and then go over budget with promotions and wage increases.

Mr. Drummond explained that the Superintendent position needs to be filled which would then cause further job openings.

Ms. Schmid asked Mr. Drummond to explain in writing the changes that are being made within the Department.

Discussion ensued about road striping, technical equipment, snow budget, snow trust fund, the costs required because of the Kelly Bill, and the costs for tree and brush removal.

Ms. Louth noted that the Kelly Bill requirements will be paid next year for 2014.

Mr. Drummond informed Council that the Britton contract for removal of brush will expire next year. He noted that the company may start charging "by the ton" for brush removal.

President Maher asked what the alternative would be and if the Department has a "Plan B".

Mr. Taylor noted that there is a company in South Jersey but their fees are higher than what Britton is currently charging.

Discussion ensued over the removal of brush for the Township.

Mr. Drummond reviewed the Department's Capital Budget.

President Maher suggested that items which cost over \$50,000.00 need to broaden more the Township's reach for responsible bidders.

Ms. Geevers suggested that the bid specs might be too specific.

Mr. Drummond advised that the bid specs include language "or equivalent" to allow for options to be considered.

President Maher and Ms. Louth discussed the budget process and timing of the preparation of the documents for introduction.

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

President Maher noted that there is a 5.3% increase in salary and wages.

Ms. Schmid advised that there is a salary adjustment for the IT Network Administrator. She noted that technology and computer service will be discussed by the Network Administrator. Ms. Schmid commented that the tuition reimbursement process is working well.

Ms. Geevers asked if Administration had some idea of actual tuition costs for 2014.

President Maher advised that a substantial decline in tuition reimbursement is expected.

Ms. Geevers noted that consultant fees increased.

Ms. Schmid explained that the cost was for attorney fees to assist with the RFP process for legal services. She noted that there seems to be a difference in opinion regarding the Faulkner Act.

Ms. Geevers advised that this line item was reduced last year during the budget process.

President Maher felt that the \$5,000 in funds for consultant costs to be used for attorney fees should be placed in the Council's budget. He recommended that Administration's consultant fees be reduced to \$8,000.

Discussion ensued about where in the Council's budget the funds should be placed. It was decided that the fees should be placed in the conferences and educational line.

President Maher inquired about the "out of State" travel being eliminated by Mr. Hary, the past Administrator.

Ms. Schmid and Ms. Louth noted that they was not aware of any policy.

Buildings and Grounds

Ms. Schmid outlined the Municipal budget requests and reviewed Capital budget needs in networking computers, software, and upgrades.

Council addressed questions.

Mr. John Church, 11 Princeton Place, addressed several budget questions.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn: Geevers

Second: Maher

VV: All approved, Mendonez, Samonte and Borek absent

The meeting was adjourned at 2:44 p.m.

Sharon L. Young
Township Clerk
West Windsor Township