

APPROVED: April 4, 2011

WEST WINDSOR TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
BUDGET WORK SESSION #1
February 28, 2011

CALL TO ORDER: President Khanna called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.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 23, 2011.

ATTENDEES: President: Khanna; Vice President: Ciccone; Council: Geevers, Morgan; Business Administrator: Hary; Township Attorney: Herbert; Chief Financial Officer: Louth; Township Clerk: Young

ABSENT: Borek

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Pete Weale, 144 Fisher Place, spoke about other local Townships not having a tax increase in the past several years.

Mr. Voytek Trela, 70 Bear Brook Road, spoke of the salaries going up more than 1% and advised that the Township's tax levy is going up more than 5%. He noted that revenues were down and asked why funds for the sewer trust fund were being used as revenue.

Mr. John Church, 11 Princeton Place, wanted to know whether the tax credit was going to affect the municipal budget.

Questions and Answers on the 2011 Proposed Municipal Budget

Mr. Hary spoke about several surrounding townships which are introducing 2011 budgets at a zero percent increase. He explained why these townships are able to do this, including Hamilton which has had large budget increases in the past, receives revenue from fire districts, and had layoffs in excess of 80 employees.

Mr. Hary explained that West Windsor Township has avoided the large fluctuation in budget increases. He advised that the Township is a growing community and needs to continue concentrating on infrastructure. Mr. Hary explained the difference between the tax rate and the levy cap along with the exclusions to the cap.

Ms. Geever asked what would need to be cut from the budget to be at a zero percent increase.

Ms. Louth noted that the budget expenses need to be balanced by the revenues. She advised that approximately 1.1 million dollars would need to be cut from the budget to reduce it to a zero based budget.

Mr. Hary explained that the tax rate is struck by the Tax Assessor working with the County, and the tax levy is what the Council and Administration has control over which are the Township's expenses. He advised that the tax rate should be available within the next few weeks.

Mr. Morgan noted that rather than Council asking questions about what can be cut from the budget, the Council should be giving Administration direction. He suggested letting Administration set the goals and priorities.

Ms. Ciccone asked Administration for either a decrease to the municipal budget or to go through each budget line item for reductions.

Mr. Hary advised that this is a responsible budget that will allow Administration to maintain services. He noted that Police and Public Works costs will need to be increased in the future to meet the community's needs.

Ms. Ciccone suggested analyzing what was spent last year and reduce the costs on line items where there is a large increase.

President Kamal noted that the Efficiency Study assists in making difficult decisions for the potential reductions.

Mr. Morgan suggested decreasing the budget one percentage point at a time to visualize what costs would need to be reduced or eliminated. He advised that Administration knows what the priorities are for the Township and this would enable Council to make a well informed decision.

Ms. Geevers asked Administration to provide several scenarios for reducing the Township's municipal budget.

Mr. Hary suggested a philosophical discussion on policy and services take place so that Council can suggest palatable areas to reduce or eliminate.

Ms. Louth noted that a decision to reduce the budget further will affect subsequent years. She advised that revenues are decreasing, and other Townships had to make drastic changes and reductions to get their budgets within cap.

Mr. Hary referenced several capital projects which will need to be completed, including the reconstruction of the Public Works building and the removal and construction of the Emergency Services and Recreation wing of the Municipal Building.

Ms. Ciccone noted that Council needs to be kept informed on future projects so that funds can be budgeted for a timely completion.

President Khanna suggested that Administration identify cost reductions in \$375,000 increments for Council to review for budget discussions.

Mr. Hary noted that time would be needed to produce the reports. He also advised that under this form of government it is the Mayor's budget until it is presented to Council; at that point it is the Council's budget. He informed Council that they should make recommendations on items or services which should be reduced or eliminated from the budget.

Ms. Geevers asked Administration for options for reducing the budget.

Ms. Ciccone suggested reducing the appropriation reserves.

Ms. Louth explained that only 2% of the appropriation reserves are left, and that the remaining 2010 appropriation reserves and the unanticipated revenue go into the fund balance after closing out the line items. She also reviewed the calculation process for the salary and wage line items.

Mr. Morgan asked Administration how the reduction of 1.8 million dollars would affect the Municipal Budget.

Mr. Hary noted that he would be reviewing the open space tax for long term liability and maintenance of the parcels. He advised that resources need to be allocated to service the 46% of open space in the Township. Mr. Hary suggested increasing the percentage of open space tax that will be utilized for maintenance of the parcels.

Ms. Louth explained the tax rebate program for residents and advised that most of the responsibility for processing this plan falls onto Township staff.

President Khanna recapped Council's expectations from Administration which is to provide an example of what reductions would be taken to reduce the Municipal Budget by 5% or by 1.8 million dollars.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn: Morgan
Second: Ciccone
VV: All ayes, Borek - absent

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Sharon L. Young
Township Clerk
West Windsor Township