

SPECIAL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING
February 8, 2014

A Special Budget Meeting of the Township Committee of the Township of Cranbury was held at 9:00 a.m. in the Town Hall Meeting Room. Answering present to the roll call were: Township Committee members: Dave Cook, Glenn Johnson, Daniel Mulligan, Jay Taylor, and Mayor Susan Goetz. Also present was: Denise Marabello, Township Administrator/Director of Finance and Kathleen R. Cunningham, Municipal Clerk/Assistant Administrator. Mayor Goetz led in the salute to the flag and Ms. Cunningham gave the following Open Public Meetings Act statement:

In accordance with Section 5 of the Open Public Meetings Act, it is hereby announced and shall be entered into the minutes of this meeting that adequate notice of this meeting has been provided:

- (1) Posted on January 21, 2014 on the Bulletin Board of the Municipal Office at 23-A North Main Street, Cranbury, New Jersey and remains posted at that location.
- (2) Communicated to the Cranbury Press, Home News Tribune and Trenton Times on January 21, 2014.
- (3) Was filed on January 21, 2014 at the Cranbury Municipal Office, 23-A North Main Street, Cranbury, New Jersey, posted on the Township's web site and remains on file for public inspection, and
- (4) Sent to those individuals who have requested personal notice.

Mayor Goetz gave a "recap" of the previous Budget Meeting which was held on January 18, 2014 and reported today's meeting will address Recreation, an analysis of operating decreases, salary pool and use of surplus and the tax rate.

Ms. Dominique Jones, Vice President, Board of Recreation Commissioners and Ms. Beth Veghte, Recreation Board Member, gave a summary of the Recreation Commission's Budget. Various Programs were discussed such as Summer Camp, Senior Programs and lunches and men's basketball. Ms. Jones reported the Recreation Commission now has a self-sustaining Trust Fund. Mayor Goetz thanked Ms. Jones and Ms. Veghte for overseeing the senior programs and lunches as well as keeping costs to a minimum. Mr. Mulligan, Township Committee Liaison to the Rec Board, reported the Summer Camp Program helps to fund the other Programs offered by the Rec Commission and this Program is "what makes Cranbury the township that it is". Mr. Cook added, the social services programs are "intangible" and to cut would take years to rebuild. Mr. Johnson added he appreciates Rec's financial success and Mayor Goetz thanked Ms. Jones and Ms. Veghte for trying to cut Rec's Budget and for overseeing the seniors.

Mayor Goetz and the Township Committee members then discussed the First Aid Squad. She reported the Township pays fuel costs for the vehicles. There are 18 volunteers, 12 are presently active. Ms. Marabello reported, The Township gives \$70,000 year to the First Aid Squad. No Cranbury Township resident gets billed for its services. The Cranbury First Aid Squad also handles the calls from the Turnpike.

Mr. Taylor stated the First Aid Squad is an essential part of the Township and police, fire and first aid should never be cut. Mr. Cook added, "To go professional completely would not be good financially". Mr. Mulligan stated he is in support of the first aid squad's funding. He recommended having a written agreement to memorialize everything between the Township and them. Ms. Marabello indicated she will prepare a document.

The Township Committee discussed the Police Department's Budget. Mr. Johnson stated cuts in the Budget are not enough this year. Planning and Zoning Boards have approved many large applications. However, per the Township's Tax Assessor, it is at least three (3) years before the Township sees tax benefits from these applications being built out. Mr. Johnson gave statistics

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from neighboring towns as to the number of police officers vs. population. He stated he does not believe the Township residents will accept a tax increase and suggested laying off police to avoid a tax increase.

Mr. Mulligan stated the last thing anyone wants to do is to lay off a policeman. He cautioned if there is not a change in the economic climate, the Township Committee will be having the same conversation next year.

As several residents were present to speak about potential cuts to the Police Department, the Mayor opened the meeting to public questions and comments:

Jane Holland, Chairperson, Municipal Alliance Commission on Drug Abuse and Alcoholism, spoke in support of not cutting the Police Department citing recent information sent to her from the State of New Jersey. Recently there were 37 cases in New Jersey of overdoses. This is no longer an "inner city problem and the State has declared it to be an epidemic". Chairperson Holland stated she does not feel a police reduction is good. Chairperson Holland also reported recently the Township gave approval to a company locating in the Township for the distribution of marijuana and asked if anyone has checked its plans for security. She recommended cutting the police should be deferred until the Township sees how this plant works out and asked the Township Committee to reconsider.

Many residents spoke of how safe they feel living in the Township and how comfortable their children feel, knowing the police officers personally and, in addition, having the police crossing them to and from school helps them to develop a relationship with the Cranbury Police. Some residents gave examples of personal experiences they have had with the Police Department and how professional they are and, yet at the same time making them "feel safe and knowing they are watching out for them and their children". Another resident suggested the Township look to share services and/or increasing the fines for false alarms at the various warehouses. The suggestion was also made to have a re-cycling center to generate a lot of revenue (such as South Brunswick does and makes over \$1-million a year).

A resident reported other towns that do not have police visibility have problems with "drug runners". It is very important to have visibility and in order to have visibility a reduction in the police force is not the answer.

Residents urged the Township Committee to not make a decision to decrease the Police Department, stating "you cannot put a price on safety".

Mr. Taylor reported companies with very large ratables are looking at a municipality's police department size and fire company size before making a decision to re-locate as they have to protect their inventory, etc.

Mr. Johnson urged residents not to challenge large warehouses possibly looking to re-locate in Cranbury Township as it would be "shooting yourself in the foot". These warehouses would benefit Cranbury's tax rate.

A resident questioned why there is police coverage on the current Bridge Project. Mr. Cook responded it is a State requirement and the dollars come directly from the contractor and not the Township; those officers are officially "not on duty".

Mr. Tom Connolly, Petty Road, asked if the pedestrian signs on Plainsboro Road and North Main and Bunker Hill can be replaced as they are "really bad". Ms. Marabello responded, the Police will notify Public Works and in the spring they will be replaced.

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The Township Committee asked residents to please pass along the Township Committee's necessity to increase taxes; everyone needs to understand the process.

There being no further comments, the Mayor closed the public portion of the meeting for remarks on the Police Department potential cuts.

Mr. Taylor left the dais for the following discussion:

The Township Committee members discussed the Fire Company and decided to fund the same amount to the Fire Company of \$90,000. In addition, the Township Committee members all agreed to fund LOSAP for the maximum allowance. The Budget this year will also have \$10,000 towards an "incentive program" for the fire company volunteers.

Mr. Taylor returned to the dais.

The Township Committee members discussed the Municipal Alliance Commission and all agreed how important its role is to the Township.

The Township Committee discussed the Fire Works. Mr. Taylor suggested partnering with businesses this year. Ms. Beth Veghte, President, Cranbury Business and Professional Association explained they do not have the money this year. However, if the Association is ever in a position to do so it would. Ms. Veghte offered to "take a look at it".

Mr. Tony Alfano, George's Garage, spoke concerning the Fire Works. He referenced the Business Association putting on the "truck display" last year and the FOP sponsoring a "Night Out". He stated the return on the investment is tremendous. He offered if the Township came to him as a business owner, he would contribute toward the Fire Works.

Mr. Paul Lindenfeld, Fraternal Order of Police Member spoke on behalf of the FOP and offered to co-sponsor the Fire Works this year. He stated the President, Michael Cipriano, could not be present today and asked him to speak on behalf of the FOP. The Township Committee thanked the FOP for this gracious offer.

Mr. Lindenfeld then spoke as a Cranbury resident. He reported he is presently a certified Intensive Care Paramedic and has been for 24 years. Mr. Lindenfeld reported hospitals have cut back the 24-hour coverage of the Intensive Care Paramedic units. A unit presently does not operate from 7:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. and on Monday's stops coverage at 3:00 p.m. He stated this is "something that has slipped under the radar" and asked the Township Committee to help secure a unit out of the new Princeton Hospital at Plainsboro. They have applied to the State of New Jersey however it has been on hold for quite some time. The Township Committee agreed something needs to be done and responded they will work on the problem.

The Township Committee discussed leaf collection, chipping and clean up weekend and made a decision to leave all as is.

The Township Committee discussed the Salary Pool. Ms. Marabello indicated part of the Recycling Tonnage Grant can be used to pay part of the salary for the staff person however, she urged the Township Committee to remember part of these funds are used by the Public Works Director.

Ms. Marabello stated she does not want to "lose head count" at Town Hall and also does not want employees to feel "unappreciated". Everyone at Town Hall works very hard and in the past few years several positions have become part-time instead of full-time positions. The Township Committee members unanimously agreed to fund the Salary Pool this year \$28,000 total with the understanding she will use \$25,000 from the tonnage grant to partially fund one staff person's salary.

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The Township Committee discussed the use of surplus funds and increasing the tax rate this year. Mr. Mulligan stated, "The core operating budget has stabilized over the past four (4) years and the Township Committee has made many cuts; it is the best decision to raise taxes with the facts given". Mr. Johnson stated he was approving the increase "with caution as we cannot do this every year".

A motion was made by Mr. Taylor, seconded by Mr. Johnson to increase taxes by three- (3) cents and using \$1,344,050 from the Township's surplus.

Vote:

Ayes: (Cook
(Johnson
(Mulligan
(Taylor
(Goetz

Abstain: (None
Absent: (None

Mr. Mulligan reported he previously had forgotten to bring up an issue; the Mayor's Gold Tournament would rather not fund the "privacy screens" which were recommended for the "Porta Johns" at Heritage and Millstone Park. They have other projects to fund.

The Mayor opened the meeting to public questions and comments. Mr. Tom Connolly, Petty Road, stated he is opposed to the salary pool (increases) and to have a three-(3) cent tax increase; it is a lack of creativity with this year's Budget. Mr. Connolly added the Township could do better with soliciting warehouses to move to the Township. Mr. Cook responded once the Panama Canal Project is complete (2015) it will definitely have an effect on towns which are near Port Newark and easily accessible to the Turnpike such as Cranbury Township. Mr. Cook reported the vacancy rates at many of Cranbury Township's warehouses are coming down from what they had been. Mayor Goetz responded the Township is going to take \$25,000 of salary out of the grant to be used toward a salary. Mr. Connolly mentioned the Township should go off of the State Health Benefits and go private. Mr. Taylor responded he has asked Ms. Marabello to work up statistics for him on this issue.

Ms. Kirstie Venanzi, Brainerd Drive, spoke as both a resident and President of the Library Board, thanking the Township Committee for its work on the Budget and stating that she was thankful she came to the meeting as she had obtained an education! There being no further comments, the Mayor closed the public part of the meeting.

On motion by Mr. Mulligan, seconded by Mr. Taylor and unanimously carried, the meeting adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

Kathleen R. Cunningham, RMC
Municipal Clerk