

SPECIAL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING
January 18, 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: Glenn Johnson, Dan Mulligan, Jay Taylor, Dave Cook 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 8, 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 8, 2014.
- (3) Was filed on January 8, 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 explained the budget process and what percentages of residents' tax bill is allocated to the County (20%) School (56%) and Township (remainder of the tax bill). Mayor Goetz reported this will be a "tough year as there are no shovels in the ground for any new warehouses and the Township is experiencing decreasing revenues". Mayor Goetz also reported every Department in the Township has done a great job of doing with less.

Mr. Taylor reported last year the Township Committee did not increase taxes. Mr. Cook added, there is a five (5) – year component to the budget process and each year the Township's surplus has been getting smaller and smaller. Ms. Marabello added, "It's about the long-time future of the Township".

The Township Committee reviewed the Police Department's Budget. Ms. Marabello started the discussion, reporting the Chief and she went through the Department's Budget, item by item and cut \$6,300. They looked at overtime and the Chief is willing to cut \$30,000 off of the overtime costs.

Chief Varga reported he is continually trying to work with what he has rather than use overtime and hold the overtime at \$140,000. Ms. Marabello added the Chief is about even with 2013 with the cuts he has made. Chief Varga added his Department is operating at 10% less since the two (2) officers retired quite a few years ago. He added, prior to their retirement, he had 19 officers and now he is operating with 17 which is very difficult. He stated he would hope the Township Committee would look to make cuts in other areas other than jeopardize the public safety of the Town.

Ms. Marabello discussed the Police Department's Capital Budget request and indicated she has asked the Department to rate which items are most important. Ms. Marabello suggested to the Department a cap of \$160,000 on Capital items for this year.

Mr. Mulligan urged Chief Varga to think about replacing officers with part-time officers in the future. Chief Varga passed out a copy of the New Jersey Statute which mandates a police officer cannot be replaced with a part-time officer. Mr. Mulligan then requested Chief Varga to come to Township Committee meetings on a monthly basis to report on his Department's Budget.

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Mr. Taylor left the dais as he is conflicted on the following discussion:

The Township Committee discussed the LOSAP Program and funding for this year. Ms. Marabello reported the maximum for this year per member is \$1,589.00 and there are approximately 24 fire company members and 15 for First Aid for a total of \$61,971.00. This total represents a \$6,000 increase since last year.

The Township Committee members were in agreement to fund the maximum amount for each member of LOSAP (with Mr. Taylor recused).

Mr. Taylor returned to the dais.

The Township Committee made the decision to not discuss the "Salary Pool" until after a decision is made on the tax rate.

The Township Committee discussed increases in operating line items.

Mr. Taylor left the dais as he is conflicted on the following discussion:

The Township Committee discussed the Fire Company's Budget and Mayor Goetz reported she will review the Fire and First Aid's Budget as she is the liaison this year to both. She will report back to the Township Committee once she has done so.

Mr. Taylor returned to the dais.

The Capital items requested were discussed.

Public Comment

The Mayor opened the meeting to public questions and comment. Mr. Thomas Connolly, 81 Petty Road, questioned the estimate to paint the interior of Town Hall. Ms. Marabello responded that this vendor is under State Contract and that is the price he gave the Township.

Mr. Connolly asked if surplus was used to not have a tax increase, how much would have to be used. Ms. Marabello responded if the surplus is continually used to offset a tax increase, the balance of the surplus will be zero within a few years. Mr. Connolly asked if the Township has had to "dip into the surplus" in past years and Ms. Marabello responded it has. Ms. Marabello reported one of the reasons for this year's problem is the overall assessed values have gone down. Mr. Connolly urged the Township Committee not to cut police officers as public safety for Cranbury's residents is important.

There being no further comments, the Mayor closed the public part of the meeting.

On motion by Mr. Taylor, seconded by Mr. Cook and unanimously carried, the meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Kathleen R. Cunningham, RMC
Municipal Clerk