

SPECIAL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING
FEBRUARY 4, 2012

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: Susan Goetz, Glenn Johnson, Daniel Mulligan, Jay Taylor and Mayor David Cook. Also present were Denise Marabello, Township Administrator/Director of Finance; and Kathleen R. Cunningham, Municipal Clerk/Assistant Administrator. Mayor Cook 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 23, 2012 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 23, 2012.
- (3) Was filed on January 23, 2012 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 Cook gave a summary of Cranbury's fiscal challenges. He summarized an article describing what Lawrenceville is encountering with their budget and pointed out the similarity in decreased property values experienced by Cranbury Township and Lawrenceville. Mayor Cook stated Cranbury Township will experience similar problems in the next seven (7) to ten (10) years because the Township has been spending out of surplus rather than raising taxes or only minimally raising taxes. Mayor Cook reported the Township Committee has to look at cutting costs where possible while creating or raising revenues.

Municipal Alliance Budget

Ms. Jane Holland, Chairwoman of the Municipal Alliance gave a summary and the purpose of the Municipal Alliance. Ms. Holland stated the Alliance was requested to make a \$5,000 cut, and copies of the budget were distributed to the Township Committee. Ms. Holland reported the Alliance already made a 14% cut (\$5,300) to their budget from the Children's Home Society resulting in 11 fewer sessions with the social workers at the school. Ms. Holland summarized the on-going annual programs and stated the Municipal Alliance goal set by the State is be proactive because drug/alcohol experimentation has now become more evident in elementary school children. The Alliance seeks to identify what children are at risk and educate them about drug and alcohol abuse. Ms. Holland reported all other Alliances have paid coordinators; however, Cranbury cut their paid coordinator five (5) years ago when the Alliance had to cut the budget by \$10,000. Cranbury's Alliance is run strictly by volunteers. Mayor Cook asked if the Municipal Alliance was ever under the School Board, and Ms. Holland explained the Drug Free Fair was initiated by the School Board and was one of the duties of the school nurse; however it was never under the School.

Ms. Goetz stated the Municipal Alliance is doing a wonderful job and the Township Committee, by asking the Alliance to reduce their budget, is not minimalizing those efforts. Ms. Holland stated she is a Cranbury resident and appreciates the Township Committee's diligence in examining the budget. However, she stated these programs are for children, and she is committed to having Cranbury children educated before they move on to Princeton High School. Ms. Holland was asked if she thought the School would pick up some of the programs, and she

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Municipal Alliance (Continued)

stated she is not aware of the school budget, however, she does know they do not have the staff to assume overseeing the programs. Mr. Taylor stated this discussion would not be taking place if there was not a loss of ratables in the Township. Mr. Taylor suggested perhaps fees could be charged to students taking advantage of the program. Ms. Holland stated there is low-income housing in Cranbury and there are children who cannot afford basics, like food and clothing, and she stated she would not want to turn away any child because they cannot afford to pay a fee. Mr. Taylor stated he believes the programs are valuable, however, all Boards are being asked to cut their budgets. Ms. Holland reported 32 "chat sessions" have been cut to 21 sessions and alternative activities have been cut. Donations to "After Prom Party" have been cut in half, and the eighth grade award has been eliminated. Ms. Holland stated for children in need, confidentiality is involved, and she is not an employee of the school.

Ms. Holland stated the Alliance does charge for Jam Fest and normally those funds are donated to the children's choice of charity; however that was not an option this year as Ms. Holland put the funds aside to possibly cover chat sessions. Ms. Joanne Charwin, Cranbury School Guidance Counselor, reported the School did have year-end picnics at Village Park; however the picnics are no longer held. Ms. Charwin reported the School picnics are now combined with Field Day at the School. Ms. Holland stated the School Picnic/Field Day Event does not have an alcohol/drug/tobacco education component to it. The Municipal Alliance recommended the Township Committee keep in place programs which will help students make good choices.

Recreation Program Budget

Ms. Beth Veghte, Chairwoman of the Recreation Board of Commissioners, and Mr. Ken Jacobs, Director of Recreation, submitted to the Township Committee a 2012 budget representing a 2% decrease from 2011's budget. Mr. Jacobs reported a majority of the Recreation budget provides funding to organizations that run sports leagues either in or out of the Township. Mr. Jacobs reported the largest donation (\$1,500) is to Cranbury Plainsboro Little League. He stated Cranbury Township supports the Little League with fields and field maintenance, and he stated he feels that amount can be substantially decreased. Mr. Jacobs reported the Recreation budget for 2012 is \$24,000, while in 2007 it was \$38,000. He reported the Summer Camp Program has been improved, participation has increased, and fees have been increased to cover expenses. Mr. Jacobs reported the \$8,000 received from Cranbury Township helps the Recreation Commission pay for the rental of Cranbury School facilities for the Camp Program. He reported the need for scholarships far exceeds the scholarship funding available. Ms. Veghte reported a need for scholarships for summer camp and stated Ms. Lynne Fox, a Recreation Commission member, solicited additional donations which enabled one (1) family's four (4) children to attend camp for all seven (7) weeks.

Mr. Jacobs reported 2-1/2 to 3 hours of swimming at the Cranbury Swim Club is provided three (3) times a week as part of summer camp, and he questioned why Summer Camp has to pay for approximately one-half of campers that are already Swim Club members. The Swim Club is experiencing financial difficulty and is charging the Recreation Program for each camper to swim. Mr. Jacobs stated swimming is an important part of the Summer Recreation Program. To cut expenses, Ms. Veghte explained, to cut costs, one (1) bus (instead of two (2) buses) goes back and forth from camp to the Swim Club to transport the children.

Mr. Jacobs recommended reducing Recreation Board subsidies to various organizations, and suggesting cutting some funding to Babe Ruth, PAL and Pop Warner. He stated the fees for summer camp have been kept fairly stable over the years; however over the last two years the fees were raised because the Program was changed, including additional trips each week. Mr.

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Recreation Program Budget (Continued)

Jacobs suggested the Recreation Board could increase the weekly fee for camp, and decrease some subsidies to organizations. Mayor Cook asked if the 2% reduction in budget could be increased to 3% or 4%. Mr. Mulligan stated he would prefer not to raise fees for summer camp as it is already a burden for some parents.

Mr. Jacobs reported the family campout is very successful; however there are costs involved with the event, including the movie and breakfast. He reported there is \$10,000 funding provided for senior citizens, including trips and seated exercise. Mr. Jacobs requested the Township Committee not take away funding for programs Recreation Commission has established in the Township, however, he recommended reducing the amounts given to outside organizations. He stated the Little League donation should be cut back incrementally as they count on the funding received from the Township. Ms. Marabello stated once the budget is passed, the Recreation Commission can adjust the amounts given to organizations. Ms. Marabello stated the Recreation budget is \$23,325. Mr. Jacobs suggested lowering subsidies incrementally and eventually phasing out the subsidies. Ms. Veghte stated the Summer Camp Program tries to share programs with the Cranbury Library. Mr. Johnson asked about the fees charged by the Cranbury School for the use of the facilities. Mr. Mulligan stated he had a conversation with the School about the fees and stated the School has software which breaks down the costs of everything, justifying its fees to the Program.

Mr. Mulligan stated it is very important to have the Recreation Commission involved in any decisions concerning the parks, in this specific instance, changing the dimensions of the ball field at Millstone Park. Mr. Jacobs stated it was discussed at a Recreation Commission meeting, and he clarified it is Cranbury Plainsboro Little League ("CPLL") that would like to extend the field for their travel team. Mr. Jacobs stated the idea is to increase the size of the Little League field to prepare the boys for larger fields. Mr. Mulligan confirmed the Recreation Commission, Parks, and CPLL are all in agreement to extend the field. Ms. Marabello will direct Mr. Jerry Thorne, Public Works Manager, to proceed with enlarging the field.

Ms. Marabello confirmed Municipal Alliance cut an additional \$5,000, and the 2012 budget is now at \$30,000 plus the \$5,166 grant match. The Township Committee was in agreement.

Capital Plan

Ms. Marabello suggested looking at the Capital Plan. Ms. Cunningham explained the need to update the recording system because the old system is not compatible with new computers. Ms. Cunningham explained new equipment is needed due to the Township's inability to record outside the Town Hall Meeting Room. She stated it is important to have meetings recorded. Otherwise there is nothing to fall back on in the event of litigation. Ms. Marabello reported a new phone system would cost approximately \$11,000, and it was decided to delay replacing the phones until 2013. It was also decided to delay the replacement of remaining storm windows until 2013. It was recommended doing a cost comparison on leasing versus buying a new black and white/color copier/scanner.

The Township Committee discussed cleaning up Brainerd Lake as the debris is slowing down the water flow. A hydro rake could clean up the lily pads at a cost of \$10,000, which is less than the cost of dredging the lake. There was additional discussion about future dredging and bulkheads of Brainerd Lake.

Ms. Marabello reported two items from Public Works: the replacement of a snow plow pickup and a Toro riding mower. Ms. Goetz recommended paying for the mower out of the Turnpike Tree fund, and the Township Committee agreed to taking the mower out of the budget and keeping the snow plow in.

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The Township Committee agreed to replace Fire House radios at a cost of \$15,000, which is a necessary replacement due to narrow banding in 2012. Ms. Marabello stated another "must do" is updating the Cranbury Brook Pump Station. She reported an Ordinance is already in place for \$200,000; however an additional \$155,000 Ordinance is needed to update the Pump Station.

Mr. Mulligan asked how much the Township is spending on maintenance costs for trucks, and Ms. Marabello stated maintenance costs for 2011 was \$30,000. Bids will be going out shortly for the construction of the Public Works Storage Barn. Mr. Taylor stated replacement costs and maintenance costs must be considered.

The Township Committee discussed LOSAP. Mr. Taylor recommended giving an increase as the Fire Company is comprised of volunteers who do fundraising and the Fire Company is always working to save the Township money. He stated no other department is asked to go out and fundraise to be operational. Ms. Marabello stated the increase would amount to \$1,551 per member instead of \$1,506 per member, which would amount to a \$1,500 increase to the budget. Mayor Cook suggested staying with the 2011 amount and adding the additional headcount and suggested taking straw poll vote, which resulted in, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Mulligan and Mayor Cook being in favor of keeping the rate flat at \$1,506 per member while Mr. Taylor and Ms. Goetz were in favor of \$1,551. Ms. Marabello reported the rate is \$1,506 for 32 members for a total budget number of \$48,192.

Mr. Taylor asked to discuss Township Traffic Engineer Andrew Feranda's proposed \$2,000 budget to review the Old Trenton Road project. Mr. Taylor questioned why this cost is in the budget since the Old Trenton Road project was complete. Mr. Taylor stated, and the Township Committee agreed, this cost should not be in the budget.

Mayor Cook stated the Master Plan Interpretation by the Township Planner is very important to get done; however the Planner's budget should be cut. Ms. Marabello recommended the Township Committee decide ahead of time what the maximum or "not-to-exceed" amount should be. Mr. Taylor recommended cutting the Planner's budget by 5%. Mayor Cook stated the percentage should be taken off with the Township Committee overseeing \$2,500 cut from the Fair Housing Share.

The Township Committee reviewed the budget spreadsheets provided by Ms. Marabello. After reviewing the numbers, Ms. Marabello reported a \$9,275 savings was realized, which would not change the tax rate. Mayor Cook stated he supported an increase in the tax rate and recommended using 1.5% for predicting future operating costs. Mr. Taylor recommended a \$0.01 increase this year. A \$0.01 municipal tax increase equals \$60.00/year on the average \$600,000 home. Mr. Mulligan stated he supports a \$0.015 increase to keep long-term budget protection, and Mayor Cook, Ms. Goetz, and Mr. Johnson agreed with Mr. Mulligan. Mr. Taylor stated he was not sure about the increase. Ms. Marabello stated the Budget will be introduced the end of February.

Mr. Taylor reported a School Board member mentioned there probably will be a \$0.03 school tax increase this year. He stated it will be important how the Township's tax increase message is delivered to residents. Mayor Cook agreed getting the tax information out to residents will be helpful.

Public Comment

The Mayor opened the meeting to public questions and comment. Mr. Art Hasselbach stated he understands the budget constraints. He stated if professionals are given parameters, they will abide by them. He stated the Chairmen of the Township Boards need to run meetings more diligently to save on professional fees. Mr. Hasselbach stated the Township has to grow more ratables and stated he supports the hiring of one (1) police officer. There being no further comments, the Mayor closed the public part of the meeting.

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On a motion by Mr. Taylor, seconded by Mr. Mulligan, and unanimously carried, the meeting adjourned at 1:22 p.m.

Kathleen R. Cunningham, RMC
Municipal Clerk