

The Work Session of the Township Committee of the Township of Washington was called to order by Mayor Short at 7:30 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Comm. Popper, Harmon, Roehrich, LiaBraaten, Mayor Short, Attorney Jansen, Administrator/Clerk Gallets, Assistant Administrator Burd

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

Adequate notice of this meeting was sent to the Observer Tribune and the Morristown Daily Record on January 9, 2010 and was posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building on the same date. This meeting is being held at the Washington Township Municipal Building, 43 Schooley's Mountain Road, Long Valley, New Jersey. Notices of this meeting were sent as there were requests.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE- The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

SCHOOL BUDGETS – **Mayor Short** gave a brief overview of the status of the failed school budgets and stated that an auditor has been hired at a cost of \$7,000 to assist with the local school budget. The auditing firm was not engaged to make recommendations, but rather to provide information. **Comm. Harmon** further explained the K-8 budget review process. Mayor Short stated that resolutions will be considered at the Monday meeting with recommended adjustments.

PUBLIC PORTION

Mayor Short opened the meeting to the public with regard to school budgets and stated that the Committee requests comments, not questions.

Harry Maroney, 59 Old Farmers Road, stated that he has four sons who are concerned with the closure of the wood shop, which he believes is the most popular elective in the school. Mr. Maroney offered to donate funds to maintain the wood shop and to canvas local lumber yards for wood donations.

Leta Davis, 10 Tall Timber Drive, is grateful to hear that classroom sizes will be kept to a minimum. She is concerned that the board is taking away certain programs, such as gifted and talented, music, foreign languages, etc., that keep our children competitive. Ms. Davis noted that none of the elected Board of Education members were present at the meeting.

Jeff Mohre, Washington Township K-8 District Superintendent, noted that the auditors found the K-8 budget to be efficient and fat-free. Mr. Mohre looks forward to working with our elected officials to end the dire fiscal habits of our State government, which brought us to this discussion.

Jason Valentino, 230 Mission Road, stated that the Township Committee should respect the overwhelming defeat of the school budget, which proposed a tax increase that would have effectively eroded the tax relief residents are finally receiving. Mr. Valentino stated that the teachers union's guaranteed raises are an issue.

Sheri Andrus, 1 Christopher Drive, stated that with the decrease in the student population, and the economy as it is, administrative cuts should be made in lieu of programs that directly affect the students. Ms. Andrus was also disturbed that the Board of Education never asked the teachers to take a salary freeze, and that the Board is building a bus maintenance center.

Beth Tank, 157 E. Valley Brook Road, thanked the Township Committee and the Board of Education for their efforts for the community. She urged the Committee to leave the budget intact.

Mindy Burbridge, 2 Samantha Lane, stated that if cuts need to be made from programs, they need to be cut across the entire student population.

Tracy Gluck, 3 Samantha Lane, stated that she grew up in Long Valley. Ms. Gluck further stated that she is concerned that cuts made from certain programs will adversely impact our children and that cuts should be made from administration, specifically the position of Assistant Superintendent.

Mike McSharey, 206 W. Valley Brook Road, thanked everyone for their efforts and feels that so much is controlled by Trenton. Mr. McSharey hopes that whatever we decide, Washington Township sends a message to Trenton that they need to get their act together. Mr. McSharey is very concerned that next year, the Governor will come back to the towns and take any excess funds in reserve again. He feels that we need to be conservative and that is what the voters have said.

Tara Ligos, 30 Zellers Road, stated that she and her husband are products of the Washington Township school district, and she is raising children here. She is also a fifth grade teacher at Old Farmers Road School and took a \$25,000 pay cut to come back to Long Valley. She urged that the budget remain intact, as any cuts in education will affect us all.

Lucy Cohn, 22 Nancy Terrace, stated that she has two children in the school district and that good schools were her only reason for moving to Washington Township 10 years ago. She is very concerned with the special programs that are being cut, as her children have greatly benefited from them.

Rob Gunning, 12 Dorset Road, stated that he welcomed the opportunity to speak in front of the Committee. Mr. Gunning has heard the Committee's emphasis on academics including classroom support services, aides and substantive kindergartens, technology, special services, etc. Mr. Gunning asked the Committee to place emphasis on maintaining these special programs, perhaps with the aid of enterprise funding. Mr. Gunning also explained that he and his wife moved here for the academics.

Julie Turner, 20 Fleming Court, stated that she has been on parent advisory committees. She did not support the budget because she did not agree with what was being taken away. She does support the children and feels that more creative solutions could have been investigated. Ms. Turner feels that Administration should be the focus of adjustments.

Heather Shiembob, 9 Chestnut Street, stated that she relocated five years ago to New Jersey. After extensive research, Mrs. Shiembob and her husband chose this town because of the school district's outstanding reputation. She reiterated that she has great concern with the cuts in programs. She asked the Committee to carefully review the budget. Ms. Shiembob also was confused about the responsibility of the auditors hired for the K-8 budget. **Mayor Short** responded that more detailed information will be provided at the next meeting.

Debbie Matechak, 100 Fawnridge Drive, noted that the Board of Education was not in attendance. She recommended that the Committee follow the same strategy that corporate America has had to follow because of the current economy. Ms. Matechak implored that there be no negotiations with the teachers union, pay freezes and cuts be taken by educators and administration, and that that educators contribute towards their benefits. Ms. Matechak expressed hope that the Committee would make these recommendations and that the Board of Education would follow through with them.

Lisa Woodring, 6 Sun Valley Way, stated that she believes that the K-8 teachers have a five year contract which has not yet expired and cannot be renegotiated at this time. Ms. Woodring stated that school surpluses were taken away and indicated that she knows what is going on in New Jersey government but is not quite sure how to fix it. She does not feel that a "no" vote on the budget in Long Valley is working toward that end either. She asked the Committee to consider the budget carefully.

David Kennedy, 22 Setting Sun Drive, stated that he is a 16 year resident with children in the school system. Mr. Kennedy noted that we need to look at where cuts need to be made, but he feels that the Committee also needs to look at shared services, which have not been sufficiently addressed. He feels that his children are inspired and he is concerned about the future.

George Schroeffer, 51 Fairmount Road, stated that he is a Long Valley resident who has been a teacher at the high school for 19 years. He commented that the defeat of the budget was due to a steady media immersion in negativity toward the teachers union and teachers. Mr. Schroeffer commented that schools are our fabric, and as a parent and teacher, you never know which part of the fabric your child will grab on to. Taking money out of the budget will hurt our kids. Mr. Schroeffer recommended that the budget be sent back unaltered.

Kelly Werth, 35 Turtleback Road, stated that she has been an advocate for our children for 15 years. She knows that taxes and state funding are an issue across the board. Ms. Werth feels that the defeat of the budget was due to people's reaction to the direct impact the cuts would have on our children. Ms. Werth fought hard for the Education Foundation and volunteered to help anyone investigate alternative funding solutions.

Jami Lionetti, 4 Blackberry Place, stated that she is a 15 year resident with children in the school system. Mrs. Lionetti is concerned that many people are responding to our situation emotionally. She opined that a school system cannot be compared to corporate America because a school is not a business. However, she fears it is turning into one and that is negatively impacting our children. Mrs. Lionetti stated that if we are to meet the needs of every child in this district, we need to step back and consider what cuts would impact even one child.

Stephen Burbridge, 2 Samantha Lane, stated that he and his family moved to Long Valley based on the recommendation of friends. He has heard some anger and frustration at various meetings. Mr. Burbridge feels that it is disingenuous to take away programs and still expect that the children will be challenged in the classroom at the same level. He does feel that we do have to look at the school as a business. Mr. Burbridge stated that it is about reciprocity. We are being asked as citizens to take a tax increase to pay for some of these things. Mr. Burbridge queried, should there not be some consideration from the people who have had salary increases over the past few years who don't pay as much toward health benefits.

Cheryl Graziano, 26 Quail Run, stated that the Flocktown/Kossman PTA Board recommended unanimously to their members to support the budget presented by the Board of Education. The PTA has been encouraging members to come up with creative solutions to the budget's defeat. She appealed to all elected officials to work together and come up with creative cuts as well. As a parent, Ms. Graziano stated that she came to this town because of the school system and property values. She feels that property values are high, and our town is rated District J factor due to the consistent endeavor for quality. Ms. Graziano asked that the public be solicited for comment when the

details of the cuts are available. As a taxpayer, Ms. Graziano supports the budget. She is looking for a consistent cut across the board.

Eric Frenchman, 13 Briarwood Road, stated that he would like the Committee to review the budget for technology expenditures and asked that nothing be cut in that area. Mr. Frenchman stated that he liked the testing (i.e. MAPS) which gave him an idea as to where his kids stand in the community and outside the community. He asked that this testing not be cut. Mr. Frenchman also noted the presence of the teachers and administration, and the absence of the Board of Education numbers.

Tim Daly, 40 Schooley's Mountain Road, stated that he has lived in town his entire life. He is in the process of planning his 30th year reunion. He noted that in contacting his classmates, he is amazed by the successes and versatility of these people. By taking away programs other than the core, Mr. Daly is concerned that we are taking away the ability of our students to develop different aspects and have choices in their lives. He asked that the Committee not take away the versatility in the school system.

Cameron Esemplare, 26 Squire Hill Road, stated that she hears a common theme listening to the audience which is the desire for diversity in the offerings in the school. Ms. Esemplare stated that her main concern was that there was no discussion of shared services before the budget was developed. Ms. Esemplare does not feel that the district has a well run program. She mentioned teacher turnover, overpaid bus drivers and limited thinking. She suggested that, with 300 less students than expected when Cuccinella was built, why not close down Flocktown and use it as a charter school that offers more languages and arts, internet sessions with global students. Ms. Esemplare reiterated that anything "outside the box" which would broaden the diversity of the kids would be beneficial.

Dennis Even, 10 Harvest Lane, stated that he feels that our problem is a State problem and we are not going to correct it with this budget. He would like the cuts that need to be made to have a lower impact on the children long term, such as administrative cuts. In time, when things turn around, administration could be reevaluated with less impact on our children.

Kevin Nedd, 65 Kim Lane, stated that he has submitted an OPRA request for a copy of the auditor's report. He asked that the document be made public.

Laura Akin, 98 East Mill Road, stated that she is glad to have the Committee review the budget from their perspective, as most of the Board members are educators. Ms Akin stated that when budgets are failing, programs are being cut and people are losing their jobs, it is an indication that our contracts are too rich.

Rich Mistkowski, 2 Green Hills Road, stated that he feels this is the time for the community to come together. He has two children, one of whom is a special needs student and he has found the school and special ed programs exceptional. He asked that the Committee keep up the good fight and do a good job in focusing on the children.

Michelle Munley, 51 Winay Terrace, stated that she feels that the Board has done a phenomenal job in trimming the budget as much as possible. She opined that cutting any further will be to the detriment of our children. Ms. Munley stated that residents have an opportunity to vote on the school budget, but not on the municipal budget. She stated that the Committee should take this as an opportunity to trim their own budget so that the impact on the school is less and we can keep our taxes lower.

Tracy Tobin, 4 Mountain View Ave, stated that he has had the opportunity to review 5 defeated school budgets. He feels that the school budgeting process was developed by accountants, wherein a lay person could not easily decipher the information. Mr. Tobin stated that our situation is not unique to New Jersey, it is nationwide. He feels that the entire structure for funding schools has been broken for years, and that the legislature has emasculated the education system. Mr. Tobin explained that the municipal budget comprises only 17% of our tax bill, whereas the combined schools are between 70% and 71%. Cutting the municipal budget will not be enough. Structural changes need to be made by the legislature, or this situation will happen again and again.

Mayor Short stated that no formal adjustment numbers have been established. There is no formal document from the auditors to date. Any final report will be made available to the public. The Committee does not want to put the Board in a position where they are not able to move forward next year. The municipal budget will be introduced this Monday evening and the Committee will take public comments at that time. Mayor Short noted that the Township's six labor unions have agreed to furloughs and to contribute 1.5% toward their health benefits to make the municipal budget balance. If such action was not taken, the municipal budget would have increased 11%, whereas the Committee has held it to a 2.5% increase. Shared services are being pursued this year.

There being no further comments or questions, Mayor Short closed the meeting to the public.

Mayor Short declared a ten minute recess.

DISCUSSION

WTMUA VACANCY – Comm. Popper stated that a resume was received from Mr. Paul Peters to fill the vacancy. An interview will be set up on Monday evening with Comm. Popper and Comm. Roehrich. Interviews will also take place for other Board positions.

FAIRMOUNT ROAD – FARM ACCESS – A letter was received from Bruce Andrews, whose farm surrounds the middle school. Mr. Andrews has requested access from Fairmount Road to his fields. Mr. Andrews was asked to provide reciprocal access through his property for the Fall Festival, etc. The Committee agreed in concept. **Attorney Jansen** stated that a license rather than an easement could be granted which would be specific to Mr. Andrews. A resolution will be needed to grant the license.

PUBLIC PORTION

Mayor Short opened the meeting to the public.

Leslie Mule, 21 East Maple Ave, inquired about the status of the golf course. **Mayor Short** stated it is anticipated that they will have 9 holes open in June, but a series of items must be completed first. The golf course would like to have the full 18 holes open by September or October. The size of the clubhouse has been reduced. A sewage issue with the DEP still exists. Ms. Mule also inquired about the status of the townhouses on Fairview Avenue. **Mayor Short** explained that the units were originally age restricted, however, last year Governor Corzine signed legislation allowing some age restricted units to become unrestricted market units. Therefore, out of 35 units, 9 of those will become low or moderate income housing. Recreation facilities are currently an issue. The Planning Board will continue to review the matter.

Doug Prince, Black River Road, inquired about our shared services with Califon and Tewksbury. **Mayor Short** responded that two years ago Washington Township took over the Califon Police Department and Court and is compensated approximately \$300,000 for that service. Washington Township rents out the municipal court room to Tewksbury for \$833 per session. Tewksbury also pays Washington Township approximately \$37,000 per year for Fire Department services for a section of their town. Last year Washington Township also began providing services to Chester's Health Department for approximately \$64,000 per year. Chester also utilizes the services of our CFO, Kevin Lifer at a cost of \$30,000 per year. Other opportunities are being investigated.

Walt Cullen, 9 Laurel Drive, inquired when the Township will see some revenue from the golf course. **Mayor Short** responded that portions of the golf course are being assessed now.

Tim Daly, 40 Schooley's Mountain Road, stated that since the drainage system has been put in, water comes streaming down Schooley's Mountain and washes out his backyard. The Township started to address this issue about four and a half years ago, then ceased before its completion. Mr. Daly wants to know when he can expect this drainage to be completed as he now has property damage. **Comm. Harmon** will ask the DPW to address it. Mr. Daly asked what the status is of the by-pass. **Mayor Short** responded that the County has come through and purchased the property from great turn to West Mill Road. They are negotiating the purchase of the land where our fireworks are held. A grant has been received for construction, however, it is still in the planning phase and there is no money to continue. Mayor Short believes it will take some time.

A resident inquired whether the high school budget review process was similar to that of the local district. Mayor Short stated that there are five municipalities and each sends two representatives. **Comm. Roehrich** further explained that the representatives met on three occasions and hammered out recommended adjustments. He stated that they are 99% of the way there and will hopefully be done before Tuesday.

Tracy Tobin, 4 Mountain View Ave, asked whether the Warren/Morris Council of Governments was still active and if so, are there any impending shared service projects. **Mayor Short** responded that they are active and there is one live project involving Independence Township. Mr. Tobin asked if the Township has looked at any senior citizen shared services. Mayor Short responded that there are none that he knew of at this time. Cameron Esemplare is working as a liaison with the Chesters regarding senior shared services. Mr. Tobin inquired about County shared services. Mayor Short responded that there is shared equipment so that the counties can pull from a pool of equipment when needed. Mayor Short also referenced the GEM project which would take the entire County and turn it into six different regions which would share municipal services. Mr. Tobin inquired whether the Mayors are putting pressure on the various Freeholder Boards regarding cooperatives. Mayor Tobin stated that it was discussed at a recent meeting by several Mayors. Mr. Tobin is looking for follow through.

There being no further comments or questions, Mayor Short closed the meeting to the public.

FLEA MARKET SUB COMMITTEE – **Mayor Short** indicated that there are a lot of people seeking to sit on the Flea Market Committee. The sub-committee's charge would be purely fact finding and the members should be impartial. Interested people will be contacted by phone and a decision as to who will serve on the subcommittee will be made on Monday evening.

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MERGER – These two committees will be combined as many of their efforts are redundant. **Attorney Jansen** explained that the Downtown Revitalization Committee was not established by ordinance. Mayor Short stated that they will meet with the Committees on the 25th and discuss this merger.

ALSTEDE FARMS – LEAF MULCHING – Alstede Farms informed the Township that they will be leaf mulching on farmland that they cultivate. The farm is looking to the Township for leaves. Kurt Alstede will be contacted for further information.

WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN (WQMP) – A WQMP was submitted three years ago and has yet to be approved. The MUA, DEP and the Highlands are now involved in getting this plan finalized.

SET TOWER BID DATE – Advertising will take place on the Thursday after the Regular Meeting. It is hoped to accept bids before the Work Session in June. When completed it will be a source of income for the Township.

ESTATES AT LONG VALLEY – SPEED LIMIT – The DOT was initially to be contacted by Toll Brothers to approve the reduced speed limit. The statute has since changed and the issue can be dealt with at the municipal level. As our Municipal Engineer, Leon Hall is not comfortable issuing the necessary certifications, Toll Brothers will be asked to pay for a traffic engineer to do the required surveys. If the result is a 25 mph speed limit, the Township will accept the roadway.

ESTIMATED TAX BILLS – **Administrator Gallets** asked the Committee if they would like to send out estimated tax bills before the budget is passed. This is to ensure revenue is coming in to the municipality until the final tax bills are sent. The Committee agreed that the estimated bills should be sent.

FALSE ALARM ORDINANCE – **Administrator Gallets** stated that since the False Alarm Ordinance was passed, false alarms in general have decreased 18%.

ORDINANCES

VACATION OF RESERVOIR ROAD – POSSIBLE ORDINANCE – The title company could not determine for certain whether the Township owns the underlying fee. It appears that it does. The Committee agreed that there has to be some consideration. Administrator Gallets will negotiate terms.

ZONING AND PLANNING BOARDS MERGER - **Comm. Popper** brought up the potential merging of the Zoning and Planning Boards last year. He wondered if it made sense this year in order to reduce expenses. Planning and Zoning Board Official Ginny Kesper will be consulted.

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS COMMENDATION - **Comm. Harmon** stated that he would like to resurrect the commendation to the high school sports team. The June meeting will be the venue for this commendation.

PROPOSALS FOR E-MAIL HOSTING – **Assistant Administrator Burd** stated that proposals were sent out for e-mail hosting and Califon accepted.

DETENTION BASIN ON BLACKBERRY ROAD – **Attorney Jansen** stated that this was a matter of litigation. The owners were to apply to the Planning Board to divide the detention basin off from the remainder of the property. They would pay the Township \$25,000 and the Township would become responsible for maintenance. There has been a significant delay but the application was finally filed this week. A request was made to have DPW cut the grass. The Committee declined, as they do not currently own the property.

The Township Committee went into Executive Session at 10:45 P.M.

**RESOLUTION #R-85-10 - EXECUTIVE SESSION – PERSONNEL: HEALTH DEPARTMENT;
TAX ASSESSOR
CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS: SHARED
SERVICES CHESTER TOWNSHIP**

Motion was made by Comm. Popper, seconded by Comm. Harmon that the foregoing resolution be adopted. Motion was carried by the following roll call vote:

5-12-10
8181

May 12, 2010

8181

AYES: Comm. Popper, Harmon, Roehrich, LiaBraaten, Mayor Short
NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: None

ABSENT: None

The Township Committee came out of Executive Session at 11:00 P.M.

The meeting adjourned at 11:02 P.M.

Dianne S. Gallets, Township Clerk