

Approved: 2/19/13

MINUTES OF THE BUDGET MEETING OF  
THE TEANECK TOWNSHIP COUNCIL  
HELD IN THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING CHAMBERS ON  
THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 2013

Deputy Mayor Gussen called the Open Session Meeting of the Teaneck Township Council to order at 7:14 p.m. and asked all those present to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: C. Parker (arrived at 7:14 p.m.), C. Stern, DM. Gussen, C. Pruitt

Absent: C. Katz, C. Schwartz, Mayor Hameeduddin

Also Present: W. Broughton, Township Manager; J. Evelina, RMC, Township Clerk; I. Abbasi, Executive Assistant; J. Jackson, Senior Clerk.

MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by Resolution 283-12, setting the 2013 meeting dates, sending a copy to THE RECORD and THE JEWISH STANDARD, filing a copy in the Township Clerk's Office and posting it on the Municipal Building bulletin board, and the Deputy Mayor hereby directs that this statement be included in the minutes.

Deputy Mayor Gussen advised of the following upcoming events and information: the last budget meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 31<sup>st</sup> at 7:00 p.m.; the next televised council meeting will take place on Tuesday, February 5, 2013, with legal opening to begin at 7:00 p.m. and public input to begin at 8:00 p.m.; the first general emergency preparedness meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 7<sup>th</sup> at the police headquarters from 7 p.m.-10 p.m.; and forms for signing up for '*alerts from Teaneck*' as well as forms for the '*volunteers sought to help during emergencies*' can be located at the front desk of the Clerk's Office.

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR GOOD AND WELFARE OR PUBLIC INPUT ON  
ANY MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA

Deputy Mayor Gussen declared that any members of the public wishing to be heard at this time shall come forward and state their names for the record. Comments shall be limited to five minutes per person

Alan Sohn – raised issue with a statement addressed to him by the Mayor at a former meeting; spoke about his review of the timeline provided by the Township Attorney regarding the four day work week and the implementation of the four day work week and the employee manual.

Charles Powers – raised issue with the four day work week and the employee manual; spoke about a book on economics he co-wrote; and provided copies to Council contracts dated, November 19, 2011 and July 2012.

There being no further persons wishing to speak at this time (or the time limit of one hour having expired), Deputy Mayor Gussen declared that the public comment portion of the meeting was now closed.

Deputy Mayor Gussen inquired whether any member of the Council had any comments prior to opening the meeting to any comments from the public.

No member of Council wished to speak.

Deputy Mayor Gussen inquired whether any member of the Council or the Manager wished to respond to the public comments.

Township Manager read a sample of a recent OPRA request to advise the Council and public of the complexity of such a request and advised that he would be bringing requests periodically to the Council's attention as they were received. Council requested copies of such requests to be scanned and emailed.

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Deputy Mayor Gussen responded to an earlier statement made by Mr. Sohn in regards to the four day work week; advising that there were several council meetings during the trial period were good and welfare offered an opportunity for the public to speak on this matter. C. Parker offered that there was also a survey provided giving the public an opportunity to be heard.

## BUDGET DISCUSSION

### 1. Review – Legal Services Budget

Township Attorney provided an analysis of his contract which included the following: his non-billable retainer in the amount of \$36,000 and billable items; Grievances, arbitration, negotiations and litigations for 2011/2012; Open tax appeals from 2007 through 2012 and provided a financial historical summary for 2011, 2012 and 2013. (Attorney's report attached)

Deputy Mayor Gussen asked Township Attorney to comment of the 'ethics of ambulance chasing'. Township Attorney said he would not be commenting on the 'ethics of ambulance chasing' or 'Mr. Power's opinion of him'; Township Attorney stated that he does not generate work or ask the Manager for work. Township Attorney concurred with addressing an earlier comment made by Mr. Powers by noting that his timeline was a representation of what the records show, advising it's up to the Council to make the policy and to defend it, and for individuals like Mr. Powers and Mr. Sohn to criticize it.

C. Pruitt questioned the items noted under his billable retainage of \$36,000; Township Attorney advised that items listed were his responsibilities; C. Pruitt questioned figures noted on under the two columns noted on Page 2. Township Attorney noted that items were different categories, not totals. Township Attorney briefly defined what a tort claim was and its process. C. Pruitt questioned why the numbers increased from one year to the next. Township Attorney responded that people are very knowledgeable and if they are going to sue the government, they know there is a timeline associated with such filing. DM Gussen questioned if perhaps there were more claims after the storm, or what was his thoughts behind the increase were. Township Attorney said he did not have that breakdown; advising that the numbers are checked in two places, through the Tax Assessor/Self Insurance Claims Committee and the insurance company is put on notice right away.

Township Manager added that the Township Attorney has done an outstanding job this year in managing the legal budget; this is the first year when we came in under budget which can be attributed to managing the budget and negotiations. He commended the existing process. He spoke about Memorandum of Understanding with unions. Regarding the legal budget, the same amount was budgeted this year, as last year. With respect to Harold Ritvo's and Dennis Kohler's salary are in the respective budgets. Steve Rogut's money will be funded through the Debt Management Plan. All the fees will be in the package.

C. Stern questioned if bond counsel's fees are included in bond ordinances.

Council, the Manager, the Township Attorney and the Chief Financial Officer discussed the legal costs in connection with bond ordinances and discussed the process. Council requested confirmation from the auditor if legal costs in connection with long-term bonds are included in such ordinances, and the Manager advised that the auditor will speak on this issue at an upcoming budget meeting at which time, Council can request clarification.

Township Attorney closed with noting since his employment here in 2000 through 2010 when the Township got insurance, the Township worked early on by determining the fact patterns that led to such judgments; matters are looked into earlier with the help of the Human Resource Department, calls are made, investigations and meetings are set up early. Therefore, commenting on an earlier statement made, Township Attorney noted where one may call it generating work, I would call it being prophylactic by protecting the town.

### 2. Review – Fire Department Budget

Township Manager advised of his requested budget for the Fire Department (Page 78, Tab 5), noting it was a slight reduction of about \$5000 from last year.

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DM Gussen questioned the difference between the 2012 adopted number and the 2012 spent number and asked when we would actually know the spent number. Township Manager advised he hopes to have the total spent numbers in by February.

Township Manager further advised of a policy were the town tries to save and conserve money were possible, delay purchases and noted that he does not believe Departments Heads should be punished for not spending what their budget was capped for.

DM Gussen spoke as to how the Manager thought the Department Heads would feel punished, noting if they have not used all funds in their budget for that year, why would it then be increased rather than decreased.

C. Stern referenced account 240 'new employees' and noted the bulk of budget reduction, the approved budget for that line is \$8000 less than last year. Township Manager advised it was to budget for three new employees, whereas last year there was more.

C. Pruitt questioned the rationale as to the increase to five; Township Manager advised it was not increasing; it was to just fill the vacant positions.

DM Gussen spoke about staffing and asked for clarity; Township Manager advised that the Fire Department was often not at the staffing level it should be on a daily basis.

Fire Chief Anthony Verley provided clarity on staffing and talked about the centralized dispatch center. C. Stern clarified that there was not an increase in staff; Chief Verley concurred and added that the firefighter was just being re-assigned.

C. Pruitt questioned whether the County had a new free dispatch program; Township Manager advised he was looking into it. C. Pruitt further noted that there was a County proposal that would provide a reduced cost to the Township. Township Manager concurred.

DM Gussen said either way we are looking into dispatch consolidation, whether consolidation took place at Fire Headquarters or the County.

DM Gussen stated he has looked at the structure of fire departments all over the county and state, noting firefighter per square mile, per structure in town, etc. and when compared to the size of Teaneck's force operating four fire houses, with a Chief, Deputy Chief and Battalion Chief for each house, it is almost like we are operating out of four separate fire houses.

Chief Verley responded that DM. Gussen's statements are incorrect. He advised there are 15 firefighters, 6 officers, including the Battalion Chief, four engine companies, all which provide a response time of two to four minutes, and this is the objective. He discussed the availability of engines, and stated that the Department is understaffed. He went on to compare the Township to other municipalities.

C. Stern questioned if the Department could go to 17 per shift. He questioned over-time and how would full strength affect over-time.

In response, Manager Broughton expressed that the Chief should speak on the matter. He advised that 2013 provides for \$425, 000 and some funds will be reimbursed from Hurricane Sandy.

C. Stern questioned if over-time would be reduced if the Department was at full strength, and the Chief answered in the affirmative and went on to say that the Department is not near full strength as a result of unforeseen circumstances with employees. Demands are as a result of natural emergencies, and companies will have to be brought in to cover the Township. He referenced the companies would respond to assist.

Manager Broughton commended Chief Verley on an excellent job with over-time, and prior to Sandy, the Department was close to meeting the costs against what was budgeted.

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C. Parker questioned if over-time be spelled out and expressed that Council never has the opportunity to see the dollar amount that is requested, and Manager Broughton directed her attention to an addendum included in the proposed budget where the figures are represented.

C. Parker questioned if the addendum represented all over-time costs and the Manager answered in the affirmative, adding that same includes part-time assistance.

3. Review – Recreation Department Budget

Manager Broughton advised that the Department is requesting \$295,978 for 2013. He made reference to the justifications in the proposed budget. He indicated that the increase from 2012 is \$40,000.00. He also advised that the Department will be seeking to purchase software in the amount of \$20,000.00 which would assist with registrations. He referenced other municipalities on board with the software.

C. Parker questioned if the software is utilized, if residents could still register, if not online.

In response, Superintendent Crockett advised that residents will be able to do both and explained the process.

Superintendent Crockett advised that the software contains four elements, specifically, registration, reservations, tuition manager and pool membership.

C. Parker questioned the benefits of the software, and in response, Superintendent Crockett advised that additional personnel is still needed due to the aftermath of the layoffs from 2009 and added demands on existing staff.

C. Parker questioned when the Program would be initiated, and Superintendent Crockett advised that it would start during a specific season and after budget adoption.

C. Parker questioned if this was the only vendor offering the service, and in response, Manager Broughton advised that this is the only New Jersey-based company.

C. Pruitt referenced a nice letter in the Suburbanite today regarding the Recreation Department.

C. Stern questioned maintenance and equipment and questioned if those items are capital items, and in response, Manager Broughton advised that the equipment would not be capital items.

Council, Manager Broughton and CFO Brown discussed the way in which items become capitalized items. They also discussed the process of purchases through operating budgets and capital budgets.

C. Pruitt requested expenditures by Department for Council, and in the event of significant changes, that a summary be included to explain how the money is attained.

Manager Broughton advised that revenue items are included in annual budgets toward the end of the process. He made reference to Tab 5 which provides what was spent in previous years, what was requested and what was approved by management.

C. Pruitt further requested an explanation of Tab 5, and D.M. Gussen directed his attention to the remainder of the proposed budget.

Manager Broughton offered to meet with C. Pruitt after the meeting to provide a better understanding.

Manager Broughton offered to discuss the “15-Minute Late Policy” while the Superintendent was in attendance and Council declined due to the time.

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4. Review – Various Budget Accounts

D.M. Gussen referenced group insurance from prior years and questioned if this item was evaluated recently.

Manager Broughton advised that the matter has not been re-visited.

C. Parker advised against this. She advised that there is no other provider that is cheaper than the State plan, and mentioned that same would need to be a negotiated item.

Manager Broughton reported on the amount of tax appeals and expressed concern to have enough monies to handle the matters.

D.M. Gussen questioned who the Township can protest to regarding the increases by the Bergen County Utilities Authority. In response, Manager Broughton advised that there may not be any increase and suggested that the Board reports to the Freeholders. He suggested that Council wait until such time as numbers are received, and in response, D.M. Gussen expressed concern as a result of the statutory dates to introduce and adopt the budget. He went on to question if there would be time to wait for their numbers.

C. Stern questioned where in the book is the number that the Township raised from the residents in terms of taxation, the tax levy, and Manager Broughton confirmed that the book does not include the tax levy or revenue. He advised that the book only represents what is expected to be spent.

C. Stern requested when the revenue numbers would be included, and Manager Broughton advised that CFO Brown is behind as a result of the Edmunds Software and the demand to now operate two systems.

Council discussed how residents are affected by way of assessments.

Manager Broughton advised certain figures cannot be arrived at until such time as the budget is adopted. He advised that Teaneck is ahead of most municipalities, and the Township is way ahead of the game. He reiterated that revenue numbers must wait, as they could change as a result of incoming aid, tax appeals and other variables.

C. Parker questioned about open bills from the previous year, and in response, Manager Broughton advised that the 2012 budget remains open, as at anytime, we can receive payments.

C. Parker questioned if the Tax Assessor addressed tax assessment during his budget presentation, and in response, Manager Broughton advised that he announced the amount of tax appeals and to expect an increase.

ADJOURNMENT

Deputy Mayor Gussen moved to adjourn at 9:00 p.m. Seconded by Councilmember Stern.

Roll Call.

In Favor: C. Parker, C. Stern, DM. Gussen, C. Pruitt

Opposed: None.

Absent: C. Katz, C. Schwartz, Mayor Hameeduddin.