

**RARITAN TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING
RARITAN TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2019**

MEETING CALLED: Mayor Kuhl called the special meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: The following were present: Mayor, Jeff Kuhl; Deputy Mayor, Louis Reiner (arrived at 5:49 p.m.); Comm. Karen Gilbert; Comm. Gary Hazard; Comm. Michael Mangin

ALSO PRESENT: Administrator, Don Hutchins; Municipal Clerk, Lisa Fania; Acting Police Chief Al Payne; Township Engineer, Antoine Hajjar; Public Works Superintendent, Brion Fleming

MEETING NOTICED: Mayor Kuhl advised that the meeting was noticed in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975 January 10, 2019 to the Courier News, Hunterdon County Democrat, Star Ledger, TapInto, Express Times and was posted on the municipal bulletin board and the Township website.

2019 BUDGET DISCUSSION

Administrator, Don Hutchins, explained that tonight's discussion is to review the 2019 Operating budget requests for the Public Works, Planning/Zoning/Engineering and Police departments. Mr. Hutchins reported that the proposed budget has been reviewed by Chief Financial Officer, Bill Pandos, and the Finance Committee comprised of Committee Member Mangin and Mayor Kuhl.

Department of Public Works

Brion Fleming, Superintendent of Public Works, reviewed the following 2019 budget request:

*three new full-time hires

Mr. Fleming explained duties of the Department and the impact of a reduced workforce in meeting state mandates including:

- *Sweeping - required to sweep every road in the Township and commercial roads once a month
- *Inlets – inspect approximately 5,500 and clean as needed
- *Leaves – required to pick up within seven to ten days (previously had seven leafers on the road; currently have five at best)
- *Parks – down to three employees from five; two mow all year; one field striping
- *Snow Plowing – down to twenty employees from twenty-five; younger, inexperienced workforce

Mr. Fleming proposed the elimination of two vacant permanent part-time positions due to one promotion and one resignation. He continued to explain that there is always someone or multiple employees out on any given day resulting in the need to constantly pull from somewhere else jeopardizing the completion of other projects such as pothole patching.

During the discussion, Committee Members inquired as to the status of road projects; the number of permanent part-time employees; base pay of employees, and the consequence, if any, to the Township in not meeting state mandates.

Mr. Fleming advised that oil and chip and reclamation for Laurelton Trail is proposed in this year's budget; that there are five seasonal part-time employees; one permanent part-time employee at Recycling and two vacant permanent part-time positions; that the base pay is \$42,500; and that the Township is required to meet stormwater requirements by law. Township Engineer, Tony Hajjar, explained that the Township is issued a New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) permit for the discharge of water into the streams and has to meet certain conditions to retain that permit.

Engineering/Planning/Zoning

Mr. Hutchins explained that salary and wages in the Engineering Department is down; and that O/E is up due to office equipment and training programs.

Mr. Hajjar advised of a request for a part-time employee in the Zoning Department.

During the discussion, Committee Members raised questions and concerns regarding the increase in data processing; salary for proposed new part-time employee; and the status of project workload.

Mr. Hutchins explained that the salary for a new part-time employee would be \$15,000, likely offset by escrow, however, worst case scenario cost to the Township, \$10,000. Mr. Hajjar explained that the request for additional staffing is due to the need to digitize documents into the SDL program which will reduce time spent on fulfilling OPRA requests. He continued that it can take the Planning/Zoning Board secretary up to one and a half to two days to fulfill such requests due to copying and scanning of the requested records. Mr. Hajjar advised that SDL had quoted \$250,000-\$300,000 to digitize just the files in the cabinets in the Department; not in the attic. Deputy Mayor Reiner suggested a volunteer, a retired person. Mr. Hajjar responded that the Department already utilizes a volunteer once a week for filing and limited administrative tasks but the digitizing process requires computer skills.

Mr. Hajjar continued to explain that the increase in data processing is due to the renewal of three autocad and two surveying licenses and software subscriptions.

Mr. Hajjar advised that workload is slow in the Planning Department but that there is a lot going on for the Board of Adjustment.

Police Department

Acting Police Chief, Al Payne, reviewed the following 2019 budget requests:

- *Two (2) new vehicles**
- *Increase in Uniform budget
- *False Alarm tracking software
- *Alcotest system
- *Fingerprint machine

**Chief Payne explained that his original budget request included three (3) new vehicles but he has since reduced the quantity to two (2), therefore a \$22,000 reduction.

Chief Payne continued that Federal and State grant funding for vests is lagging behind. He advised that the Township will eventually receive the funds but that he included an additional \$6,000-\$7,000 the 2019 budget request.

Chief Payne informed Committee Members of the request for new software for the tracking and billing of residential and commercial false alarms. Chief Payne informed Committee Members that it has been about four (4) years since the Department has billed for such resulting in approximately \$20,000-\$30,000 of lost revenue. He advised that the cost of the software is \$8,500.

Chief Payne also advised that the State will be changing the Alcotest (breathalyzer system) but has not yet approved a system. He continued that the Department will have to update its system at some point at a cost of about \$23,000.00.

Chief Payne further advised of the need for a new fingerprinting machine. Mr. Hutchins responded that the item can be purchased through the reappropriation of funds from existing bond ordinances.

During the discussion, Committee Members raised questions and concerns regarding the increase in the uniform budget; vendor used for purchasing uniforms; and the possibility of on-line purchasing of uniforms.

Chief Payne advised that the Department purchases uniforms from Samzie's in Ewing but is pursuing using the Flemington Department Store (FDS). Chief Payne continued to explain that the FDS cannot provide the vests. Chief Payne also advised that the purchase of uniforms must be through a state contract so on-line is not an option.

Regarding the replacement of the Alcotest system, Mr. Hutchins advised that this will be revisited sometime in October of this year and possibly purchased through the reappropriation of unused funds as well.

Mr. Hutchins provided an overview of the 2019 budget assumptions that included the following:

- *\$3.9 million in surplus
- *Decrease in revenue of \$352,000
- *Total deficit at \$1,194,673
- *Capital requests at \$3.7 million
- *Accumulated sick leave at \$50,000
- *Two police vehicles
- *Police alarm tracking software at \$8,500
- *Tax deficit at \$140,000
- *.57 tax increase
- *State Aid flat

Mr. Hutchins explained that revenue is down only \$352,000 because the Township received an increase in revenue of approximately \$93,000-\$94,000 from the Fire Marshal's office. He continued that the Department is now receiving State funds because "they are fully certified and everything is being done the way it is supposed to."

Committee Member Gilbert inquired as to the decrease in revenue. Mr. Hutchins explained, "we took \$400,000 last year from Capital Fund balance and that revenue is not there so we have to make that up."

Mr. Hutchins continued, "so we are turning in about \$400,000 in surplus. I asked the Auditor if we could transfer that surplus to the following trust funds – snow, recycling and healthcare and reduce our current budget by those exact same amounts. He said that was a fantastic idea."

Mr. Hutchins informed the Committee that Fire Marshal, Dennis Concannon, had requested making the part-time employee in the Department full-time and a new vehicle. Mr. Hutchins continued that the requests were not feasible with this year's budget but will revisit next year based on the Department's revenue. Mr. Hutchins advised that Mr. Concannon was fine with that.

Committee Member Mangin commented that the .57 percent tax increase is about \$26.00. Mr. Hutchins commented, "one percent would be \$50.00 per the average assessed home. You might as well take advantage of the reduction in the open space tax even if you are at .99% you are going to end up at .97%."

It was the consensus of Committee Members to review the proposed 2019 municipal budget and submit questions directly to Mr. Hutchins. All concurred next meeting will be February 5, 2019 at 5:30 to discuss the Capital Budget.

Mr. Hutchins added that he had emailed both the Fire Department and Rescue Squad advising them that they do not need to be in attendance at the February 5 meeting unless they have additional requests. Mr. Hutchins continued that the Fire Department is requesting a new fire truck; and that he had not heard from the Rescue Squad but the usual is \$36,000.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Kuhl asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion by Gilbert, seconded by Reiner

MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED

Meeting adjourned at 6:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Fania, RMC
Township Clerk