

**BUDGET MEETING FEBRUARY 7, 2011**

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FEBRUARY 7, 2011  
7:00 P.M.**

Mayor Brown called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. read the following statement led the flag salute.

IN COMPLIANCE WITH CHAPTER 231 OF THE PUBLIC LAWS OF 1975, NOTICE OF THIS MEETING WAS GIVEN BY WAY OF ANNUAL NOTICE PUBLISHED IN THE ATLANTIC CITY PRESS, ON JANUARY 30, 2011 AND THE EGG HARBOR AND HAMMONTON NEWS ON FEBRUARY 2, 2011 AND POSTED AT TOWNHALL.

**Roll Call:**

**Committee Present:** Anthony Gabris, William Kennedy, Susan Polk, Larry Riffle, Mayor Brown

**Deputy Municipal Clerk:** Ann C. Lupinetti

**CFO:** Dawn Stollenwerk

**Police Department:** Chief Paul Register, Captain John Thompson

**Public Works:** Peter Berenato

**Budget Presentation:** CFO presented the following summary of the Township's 2010 financials: Tax collection rate for 2010 was 95.7%, which is down from the prior year; fund balance is \$1,090,000 down \$402,000; and \$597,000 in income was generated. The Net Valuation Taxable for the township decreased by \$432,000.

CFO reported on the changes made to the budget since last meeting and presented a draft budget that is under the 2% levy cap by \$71,000 and has a projected tax increase of 5 cents. She also reported that, with further review, it is likely the tax increase can be reduced to an overall increase of 3.5 cents, assuming State Aid equal to the amount received in 2010. Since the last budget meeting, the following changes were made: revenues were revised to reflect actual 2010 figures, new hire for the Police Department was removed (12 funded positions and 2 Specials), Safe and Secure Grant added, reduction in dispatch fee, removal of lease-purchase payment for one police car, reduction of \$5,000 for capital improvement appropriation, trimmed other expenses in all operating budgets to reflect 2010 expenses or less, reduced engineering line item (due to no 2011 DOT funding), adjusted legal figures to reflect postponement of foreclosures due to ongoing personnel matters, elimination of \$3,000 stipend to Elwood Fire Company for rescue. Other grant figures will be added as they are received. CFO stated that this draft budget also includes a re-structuring of personnel in the Construction Office for Committee's consideration. The plan could result in a potential savings of \$10,000. Committee thanked Ms. Stollenwerk for her presentation and efforts in presenting a legal budget.

Mr. Gabris suggested eliminating Animal Control Services because he felt the reports were unrealistic. CFO noted we currently have a contractual obligation. CFO stated we need to increase our tax collection rate and urge everyone to pay taxes prior to December 31<sup>st</sup>. Mayor agreed and noted this Committee needs to educate the taxpayers on the effects of not paying taxes on time. CFO explained the penalties that are assessed for unpaid property taxes. Mr. Gabris stated in regards to consolidation he is of the opinion a savings of \$17,000 can be made in the Construction Office and suggested the Township not continue to fund storm drain cleaning, but to perhaps have Public Works and neighbors do the work. CFO stated it is a requirement for our Stormwater Management Permit. Mr. Berenato indicated we have 107 storm drains. Chief Register expressed

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his concern with Animal Control being eliminated. Mayor Brown suggested instead of consolidating positions in the Construction Office, he would like to address the salaries. Mayor Brown suggested Township Committee cut their salaries by \$1,000.00 each. Committee briefly discussed and agreed to cut their salary in half, savings of \$7,500.00. Mayor recommended a wage freeze for employees not under union contracts. CFO stated most employees are statutory and are afforded the same increases given to other employees. Mayor stated he would like the savings amount be presented to Committee regarding a freeze. Mayor Brown asked what savings we will generate with the new bulky waste permits. CFO and Superintendent of Public Works stated the reduction in bulky waste is unknown at this time.

**Public Discussion:** Chief Register commended Committee for reducing their salaries. However, he asked the Committee to consider that, for the employees, this is their livelihood, while all members of committee are retired. Chief Register noted many members of the Police Department have dual roles and that they are working with a skeleton crew. Chief asked Committee not to balance the municipal budget on the shoulders of the Police Department, and added vehicles are becoming a safety concern. CFO reported if all employees did not take the modest raise included in the proposal, the savings would amount to \$25,000.00.

Ms. Forman questioned the modest raises which were budgeted, suggested land sales which were recommended years ago by the State and have been accomplished by past administrations, and questioned the savings regarding dispatch. CFO agreed with the selling of land (last year we generated \$11,500), noted we are still negotiating dispatch services, noted Elwood Fire Company is donating a portion of their FEMA Grant towards equipment upgrades and did not want to state the modest salary increases due to contract negotiations. Ms. Forman questioned the overtime for the police department, noting the shortage of staff. CFO stated it is about \$30,000 over budget. Chief explained his staffing shortage. Ms. Forman commended Chief Register.

Michael St. Amour questioned the overtime budget for 2011, noted the loss of State of Aid last year was \$120,000 and questioned this year's loss, asked how the new tax rebates program will affect the municipality's cash flow. CFO commented \$85,000.00 is budgeted for police overtime, we are currently awaiting additional aid information from the State, and tentatively the State is to reimburse the municipality 30 days after the tax quarter is due, which will be acceptable.

Chief Paul Register asked if new rateables would improve our financial outlook and questioned the loss of open space payments previously made by the State to the municipality. CFO reported a million dollars in new rateables equals \$11,000.00 in taxes (based on the proposed tax rate) and reported Pinelands Aid was lost in 2000, and the Garden State Preservation Trust Funding for State owned open space land is being phased out. For 2011, the reduction in this funding amounted to \$20,700.00.

Mr. Michael St. Amour questioned the amount we are currently below levy. Ms. Stollenwerk stated \$71,000.00.

Ms. Kathy Chasey questioned the reduction in assessed values. CFO stated it was due to foreclosures and a tax appeal from Ocean Yachts.

Mr. Ted Bear commended the CFO and Committee for the budget presentation, asked if we obtain a recycling rebate, questioned other outstanding tax appeals and commented only professionals should be handling rabid animals. CFO noted we utilize the recycling information on our tonnage report and received funding from the State Recycling Trust Fund. 2010 recycling rate was 27.55%, which is low historically due to the March flooding (more bulky waste) and reported no other appeals are pending.

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Mayor closed public portion and entertained a motion to adjourn; so moved by Ms. Polk seconded by Mr. Riffle. RCV: Yeas: All voted yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann C. Lupinetti  
Deputy Municipal Clerk

Transcribed by,

Kimberly Johnson  
Municipal Clerk