

SPECIAL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING  
Saturday, February 16, 2013

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: David Cook, Susan Goetz, Dan Mulligan, Jay Taylor and Mayor Glenn Johnson. Also present was: Denise Marabello, Township Administrator/Director of Finance. Kathleen R. Cunningham, Assistant Administrator/Clerk and Police Chief Rickey Varga. Mayor Johnson 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 28, 2013 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 28, 2013.
- (3) Was filed on January 28, 2013 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.

Ms. Marabello gave a summary of the Operating Budget's increases by each Department.

The Township Committee discussed the History Center which houses an apartment above the premises and the apartment is credited for the Township's COAH obligations. Every time the apartment becomes vacant, a rental agent has to be hired to seek a tenant. Presently, the cost of the rental agent has been paid totally by the Historical Society. The Township Committee agreed to split the cost and will pay \$350 to the rental agent moving forward.

**Mr. Taylor did not participate in the following discussion and left the dais:**

The Township Committee discussed LOSAP. Mayor Johnson reported he had met recently with Charlie Smith and Mike Kervan to discuss LOSAP. He also reported at the present time, Cranbury Township is paying one of the highest amounts in the State of New Jersey. Mayor Johnson recommended and the other members of the Township Committee agreed a Work Session discussion is needed on LOSAP to understand what the original agreement was and how much the Township wishes to pay moving past this year. All Township Committee members agreed to pay the maximum amount this year of \$1,585 per member and to have a Work Session on LOSAP in the spring to allow more background information to be gathered.

Chief Rickey Varga discussed with the Township Committee, the need for an additional police officer. He reported at the present time the Department is becoming overloaded and work is not getting done in a timely fashion; particularly in the Detective Bureau. Ms. Marabello gave an overview of hiring a new officer vs. paying the overtime. She reviewed with the Township Committee the overtime figures from 2011 through 2016. Mr. Taylor raised his concern with the residents' safety if a new officer is not hired. Ms. Goetz indicated she is in favor of hiring a new police officer and stated the Chief would not ask for it unless needed. Mr. Cook asked what the cost would be for six (6) months and Ms. Marabello reported approximately \$23,000. Mr. Cook stated he would like a "dollar-for-dollar savings" and then he would be ok with the hiring. Mr. Mulligan reminded everyone the \$23,000 figure does not include benefits and pension costs for the new police officer and he felt fiscally there is no benefit to hiring a new officer. He reported the Township, even with its fiscal restraints has not laid any employees off and all police

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departments throughout the State are under fiscal constraints. Mr. Mulligan stated if an officer should retire then a replacement officer would have his endorsement. Mayor Johnson asked Chief Varga is there is any other method of scheduling. Chief Varga indicated the present method has been proven to be the best and most successful throughout police departments and reminded the Township Committee the 12-hour shift was negotiated in the present police contract.

Chief Varga reported the Police Department spent \$232,000 in overtime costs. Ms. Marabello added, even if there is no new hire, the money in the Budget will go from base salary to overtime.

Mayor Johnson reported the Township presently has one (1) police officer for every 235 residents. Plainsboro has one (1) police officer for every 600 residents. He stated, looking at the future, there will be a tax increase every single year; residents need a break and he is hoping this Budget will not produce a tax increase for this year. The Township Committee has done what it can and he stated he is disinclined to hire another officer.

Ms. Goetz was in favor of hiring a new officer, Mr. Cook, not in favor, Mr. Mulligan not in favor, Mr. Taylor, in favor and Mr. Johnson, not in favor.

Ms. Marabello presented to the Township Committee the proposed 2013 "Salary Pool" showing a 2% increase. She also included the overall effect the rise in "Premium Sharing" will have on staff's salaries into 2014 and reported most of the staff will see a decreased salary amount with the new rate for Premium Sharing taking effect later this year even with a 2% increase. The Township Committee members all were in favor of a 2% salary pool.

#### Public Comment

The Mayor opened the meeting to public questions and comment. Mr. John Consoli, Parkview Road, stated he is presently a Federal Law Officer and has not had a raise in four (4) years. He suggested asking others to make cuts to keep the taxpayers in Cranbury Township from "taking the hit". He added, due to the sacrifices his family has had to make with his wife's hours at work being reduced, and him not having a cost of living raise for four (4) years, they have had to make difficult choices given the fact they now have less disposable income than before and have had to make tradeoffs, such as choosing to save less for future educational expenses, retirement savings, vacation spending and eating out. Mr. Consoli reported the private sector and even the Federal Government workers have had to make sacrifices during this economy and he has not seen our State or municipal employees yet make some of these sacrifices that others have had to make. Mr. Consoli added these are tough times and everyone should be willing to make sacrifices; he and his family do not go out to dinner as often as they used to and stated others should be willing to do the same. There being no further comments, the Mayor closed the public part of the meeting.

Ms. Marabello and the Township Committee members discussed the Revenues, Surplus and the Tax Rate for 2013:

Ms. Marabello gave various examples of upcoming years and the effects on increasing vs. not increasing taxes. Mr. Cook indicated he is concerned about "burning through the Township Budget's Surplus" and recommended increasing the taxes by one cent with an opportunity to possibly decrease the rate in future years. Mr. Taylor was also in favor of a one cent increase. Ms. Goetz was in favor of a one cent increase as was Mr. Mulligan. Mayor Johnson stated he was hoping not to have to increase the tax rate however; he would go along with one cent.

After much consideration the Township Committee decided to introduce the 2013 budget with a 0 cent tax increase due in part to the fact that the assessed value from 2012 to 2013 remained stable. After further discussion the Township Committee members concluded they are willing to

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hire one (1) police officer. Mr. Cook was still concerned with the use of surplus. All members agreed to vote the 2013 Budget with a zero (0) cent tax increase.

On motion by Mr. Cook, seconded by Mr. Mulligan and unanimously carried, the meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

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Kathleen R. Cunningham, RMC  
Municipal Clerk