

TOWNSHIP OF PEMBERTON

SPECIAL MEETING

MARCH 9, 2011

6:30 P.M.

Council President Cartier announced that notice of this meeting was given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act and led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by roll call.

PRESENT

Jason Allen
Ken Cartier
Richard Prickett
Sherry Scull
Diane Stinney

ABSENT

Also Present: Mayor David Patriarca, Business Administrator Chris Vaz, Chief Financial Officer Robert Benick, Township Clerk Mary Ann Finlay

Chairman Cartier called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

BUSINESS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR FORMAL ACTION, AS ADVERTISED: For the purpose of discussing the 2011 Municipal Budget as presented by the Mayor. Formal action may be taken.

BUDGET REVIEW BY COUNCIL:

Council President Cartier relayed that they had requested additional information from Administration regarding overtime and salaries for certain Recreation programs. Mayor Patriarca advised Council that he had the breakdown from Country Lakes Beach and for the Teen Center; however he did not receive information back from the Chief for the overtime expended on the Water Carnival. The Mayor informed that the Teen Center salaries were \$20,129.00 and for the Country Lakes lifeguards the salary is \$14,000.00. The Mayor further advised that the overtime amount for the Water Carnival is \$178.00 for the Recreation Department and \$7,500 for the Public Works Department. Councilman Prickett asked about the trust fund and if it was determined how long that would take to regenerate. Mayor Patriarca advised that as he stated last evening, the profits from the programs are put into the trust fund and the Chief Financial Officer added that the balance remains stable year to year so it is self funding. Mayor Patriarca advised that the fund is used to purchase items that are not normally budgeted for and does not reflect those programs that are funded in the budget.

Councilman Prickett questioned the amount being taken from the Water Department surplus and the amount that was in the surplus. Mayor Patriarca advised there is \$68,000.00 left. Councilman Prickett commented on the money being used to balance the general ledger and the Mayor advised that is incorrect and that it had nothing to do with the general ledger, the money is being used to balance the budget. Councilman Prickett expressed that that was a lot of money to be taken out of the Water surplus.

Council President Cartier asked Council where they would like to go with the budget. Councilwoman Stinney reiterated that she feels unless jobs can be saved, they need to move on with this budget.

Councilwoman Scull suggested that the summer recreation programs need to be self supporting, in addition, she doesn't want to take out any safety related costs and feels the Director and Administration have the ability to determine if a beach is not being used noting they should not be paying them to be there for the day so Administration would have the option of moving or eliminating that position. Councilwoman Scull then expressed that the work on the BMIA building should not be done in order to save that \$125,000.00. She acknowledged that they need to take care of their buildings but if the BMIA building doesn't have a leaky roof or something similar then the \$125,000.00 could remain in the budget to help for next year. It was determined

that something could be done at the next meeting regarding halting the money for the BMIA building. Councilwoman Scull advised she has not changed her mind since last evening and has no other suggestions unless it can save jobs. Councilman Allen agreed and does not have any suggestions unless it will save jobs.

Councilman Prickett expressed belief that everyone knows how he feels and he thinks there are more cuts that can be made; he has a total of \$172,000.00 in cuts that could be used to employ those being laid off or to reduce the tax rate. Council President Cartier agreed with Mr. Prickett that there are cuts that can be made to help lower the rate the tax payers would have to pay and asked for motions from Council.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council President Cartier opened the meeting to public comments. Those indicating a desire to be heard were: **Christina Rodriguez**, relayed that she was here because she is aware that the Teachers for the Visually Impaired that are sent from the State will be let go from the Southampton School District and they serve the Pemberton Township students. She wanted to make them aware of this since it will end up affecting Pemberton Township School's budget since they will now have to pay for it. **Richard Koster**, relayed that he heard good suggestions from the Public and feels Council is unwilling to be unpopular by doing the necessary cutting. He commented on the rising debt and how that would affect the next generation. He thanked Councilman Prickett, Claire Wadsworth and anybody else who had money saving suggestions. **Claire Wadsworth**, noted that the suggestions she had last night were a total of \$216,400.00 in cuts. She commented on the Mayor's budget letter and the difficulty presented over the 2% tax levy, however she remembers about 6 months ago that raises were given out that were well above the 2% cap. Ms. Wadsworth further commented on the surplus amount and what could be done to regenerate that over the year. Ms. Wadsworth questioned transfer resolutions that were done at the end of last year and Council President Cartier advised that transfers went into other line items, not into surplus. **Scott Hamilton**, noted that he wanted to say something for the benefit of the young people in attendance regarding the \$14 Trillion the country is in debt for, noting that it would be like having \$14 million people that are millionaires and them having to give that money over to the government to pay that debt. Mr. Hamilton further commented on the state and township debt. He expressed that the property taxes along with the taxes paid on everything else is probably at least half the money earned that goes to paying taxes to the government. He discussed the BMIA building and suggested that maybe the people that use the building should get together and do the repairs needed. **Jean Dwane**, questioned how many employees the Township currently has and what it costs to employ one person. Mayor Patriarca advised the Township has approximately 165 to 170 employees and he could not give a cost per employee since it can vary greatly depending on the medical expenses for that employee. Ms. Dwane commented on the layoffs and if anyone was being laid off. Council President Cartier noted that currently there were 15 people on the list and it affected just about every department. Ms. Dwane asked for the figure of how much they have in surplus and how much is owed in MUA and Water debt. It was advised that there was \$1,394,000.00 in surplus and the debt for the MUA is \$4,200,000.00 and they were making their last payment this year for a bond for the Water Department. Ms. Dwane asked Councilwoman Stinney how they could do more with less to which Councilwoman Stinney advised that the community could come together and have more participation from their churches and residents and have the school pick up some of the funding for some programs. Ms. Dwane suggested going to the businesses to donate for the fireworks. Ms. Dwane asked if the Council feels everyone should tighten their belts, including the employees contributing to save jobs. Ms. Dwane additionally suggested looking at the professional fees. She expressed that the Township can't keep coming to the residents with their increases. Ms. Dwane asked who had the last word on who gets laid off and was informed that Administration makes that decision. Ms. Dwane commented that the police officers should not be laid off. She then noted to Council President Cartier that he must recognize a point of order in a meeting. **Rev. Guy Glass**, commented that as a resident and Pastor of this community he is concerned with the police and recreation programs being cut and feels the town will suffer. Rev. Glass stated statistics regarding the reductions in police force and how it could affect the town. He noted that he has personally seen the benefit of the Recreation Department programs and he feels it is a recipe for disaster to cut police and the programs. **John Shaw**, commented that he has been up where Council has been and knows what it is like. He noted that he hopes they look at the departments they are laying people off in and what that is going to leave, he hopes no one gets laid off, especially fellow law enforcement officers. He commented on the crime rates rising if police are laid off and cited Newark and Camden as examples. **Chuck Fisher**,

expressed that no one wants anyone to lose their jobs or get demoted yet nobody wants to give up anything and thinks the Council should go through the budget and that they need to nickel and dime it.

There being no additional members of the public indicating a desire to be heard, Council President Cartier closed the meeting to public comments.

BUDGET REVIEW BY COUNCIL: (contd.)

Council President Cartier asked Council again where they wanted to go. Councilwoman Scull noted that she is already not popular because she thinks they should go up to the 9 cents that the 2% cap would allow to save jobs. Councilwoman Scull further noted that she thinks cutting anything else out of the budget will put the Township in worse shape for next year in addition they could cut the money to save jobs but they don't have the final say. She commented to the public that they don't want them to cut the police but they also don't want a tax increase and it can not be both ways. Councilwoman Scull further expressed that she doesn't want to lay anybody off and advised the Mayor months ago of that, however she will be watching every expenditure this year and making sure that no money is spent needlessly and that if she could not get a guarantee that jobs would be saved then she is not cutting anything further.

Councilman Prickett responded to Councilwoman Scull's comments noting that Council has the ability to make the cuts and put the funds in the line items that would save the jobs and noted it is true that it is up to the Mayor to put the people back in those positions but Council can do their parts by putting the money back in the lines. Councilman Prickett further commented that he sees approximately \$600,000.00 in this budget that will go to surplus next year, noting that next year is an election year and he feels that may be the reason because they don't want to raise taxes next year.

Council President Cartier asked again where Council wanted to go with the budget.

Motion by Scull and Stinney to increase the tax rate 2 more pennies to put \$175,000.00 in the Police Line item. Scull, yes; Stinney, yes; Prickett, no; Allen, yes; Cartier, no. Motion Fails.

Council President Cartier clarified that four votes are required to increase the budget.

Motion by Prickett to remove the \$115,000.00 dump truck from the capital improvement line. Motion fails for lack of second.

Mayor Patriarca advised that before they continue, they are working off the wrong side of the tax levy cap and cited the figures that affect the cap.

Councilwoman Scull commented that a full 9% tax increase is the best option to get the money and she knows the public does not understand the way the budget works, but if other cuts are made this year instead of laying off three police officers this year they could be laying off six next year.

Business Administrator Christopher Vaz explained that when they were given the budget numbers from the Auditor they were at a 12 cent increase and they had to bring it down to 9 cents to be within the 2% cap. He advised that they then further cut it to a 6.7 cent increase, noting that just to get from the 12 cents to the 9 cents is when they had to go in and cut salaries and the additional decrease was done through pulling revenues from the insurance, water utility and that money will not be there next year.

Council President Cartier advised Council that they have three options, send the budget back to the Mayor, introduce the budget as it is now or adjourn for the night and reconsider it another day. Councilman Prickett suggested adjourning for the night and checking out their other options. He expressed that there is more that can be cut from the budget, to which Council President Cartier agreed with him. Councilwoman Scull does not think the budget will be any different than what they have now. Councilwoman Stinney agreed with Councilwoman Scull, she gave her opinion to try and save three police officers and they took the vote and that is where it stands. Councilwoman Stinney noted the only way they can do it is go back to the voters with the referendum.

Councilman Prickett stated that they need to employ the three police officers and they need to find a way to do that without raising taxes and he feels it can be done and he is willing to sit down and do that. Councilwoman Scull noted that it was certainly not her plan to lay off 15 people, but as she stated last night and tonight she feels it would be irresponsible to the community to cut the budget when they know it will just make the situation worse next year and feels they need to find a way to generate more funds. Councilwoman Scull commented on the amount of surplus used last year and that was done because that is what the Governor wanted everyone to do and how that did not help their situation this year. She noted that she doesn't want to see taxes raise, she pays them and she has a senior citizen on a fixed income, but looking at the budget they are looking at \$6 a month more on the average \$100,000.00 home and she doesn't think that is an awful lot to ask for, if they raised the 2 pennies that would be \$8 a month more, she would be willing to do that to save jobs.

Motion by Scull to introduce the budget as amended. Motion failed for lack of second.

Mayor Patriarca noted they have until the 16th to introduce the budget and asked Councilman Prickett to send him a memo outlining the \$172,000.00 in cuts he has and the Mayor advised that he will compare that to his plans for operations and will apply them if applicable. Mayor Patriarca also asked the other Council Members to submit their suggestions to him and asked them to have them by the following day.

Council President Cartier advised Council if that is the way they wish to go it must be done by motion. Councilwoman Scull advised that if the Mayor does find the money for staff that she is willing to concede 10% of her salary, Councilman Prickett noted that he will concede 20% of his salary and Councilman Allen stated that he is willing to contribute as well.

Councilwoman Stinney motioned to adjourn the meeting. Council President Cartier clarified for Council that the budget still belongs to Council and they need to do something with it.

Meeting ended approximately 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ann Finlay, MMC
Township Clerk