

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING  
OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL**

**JANUARY 26, 2011**

A Special Budget Meeting of the Mayor and Council was held in the Municipal Building on January 26, 2011.

Mayor Bivona opened the meeting at 8:30 A.M. and Greg Hart, Borough Administrator, read the Sunshine Law Statement.

**ROLL CALL**

The following Council Members and Professional Staff were present: Mayor Bivona, Councilman Friscia (8:55 A.M.), Councilman Pedone, Councilwoman Lota, Councilman Smith, Borough Administrator Hart and Chief Financial Officer Pike. Council President Ramsey and Borough Clerk Sally Bleeker were absent.

**PUBLIC'S OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK**

Mayor Bivona said that no one from the public was in attendance to speak this morning.

• **BUDGET DISCUSSION**

Mr. Hart reported that Dieter Lerch is ready to prepare the Annual Financial Statement (AFS) as well as the surplus analysis and the other projections needed that will help to determine more definitive numbers for this year's budget. He will have all of the necessary information when he attends the February 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting. Until this information is available, it is not appropriate to look at the bottom lines and strategy issues. Mr. Hart suggested that they focus on the list of policy issues and any other issues that the Mayor and Council want to address in their individual budgets. He added that there are three salary related issues and a Closed Session will be necessary for that discussion.

Councilwoman Lota said that a decision needs to be made regarding the road paving program. They must decide by January 31<sup>st</sup> whether or not to join the Northwest Bergen consortium on paving. Mr. Hart referred to the Boswell Engineering letter of January 24th and Councilwoman Lota reported that she, Brian Peterson and Kevin Boswell used the 2007 Road Survey which was prepared by Boswell to determine which roads should be considered as part of this year's paving plan. She also compiled a list of resident complaints and found that the highest numbers of complaints were regarding Indian Trail Drive, closely followed by Training Ridge Road and Winton Gate Road. She stated that Mr. Boswell's letter lists the six areas that are the most emergent and he recommends going out for a base bid and alternate bid for these areas. Mr. Hart commented that these findings are consistent with the 2007 Road Survey. Councilman Smith recalled that the Council had discussed upgrading the pavement material or adding another inch to the pavement.

Mayor Bivona said that people need to understand that there is a method and a process to the way these areas to be paved are selected. Councilwoman Lota said that she is comfortable with the list of roads that have to be done this year. Mr. Hart said that Mr. Boswell hasn't given a recommendation on the Northwest Bergen bid and it appears that he likes to have control over the timing of the bid process. There is also the issue that alternate bid items cannot be added in with the Northwest Bergen bid. He pointed out that most of the northwest Bergen towns are part of this bid and they feel that it is beneficial.

Mayor Bivona stated that in the past road work and paving was funded from the Capital budget and he would prefer returning to that method. This would prevent the bonding of roads every year because road paving is a recurring operating expense. Mr. Hart stated that the goal is decreasing debt and this should be viewed in the context of all capital items being considered for the year.

Mr. Hart noted that Councilman Friscia arrived at the meeting at 8:55 A.M.

After more discussion on the road paving issue, Mr. Hart suggested waiting until after they have made a decision on the capital budget. By that time, the Engineering Oversight Committee will have made a recommendation on how much to spend on this project. He added that the matter is listed on the February 1<sup>st</sup> meeting agenda when the Mayor and Council will have an opportunity to discuss the program further with Mr. Boswell.

**Blackberry Service for the Borough Administrator**  
**Blackberry Service for the DPW Superintendent & Assistant Superintendent**  
**Blackberry Service for the Construction Official**

Mr. Hart said that he supports this communication method for the Borough Administrator DPW Personnel, and the Construction Official. There is an employee contribution for the service and therefore the cost shown is not the cost to the Borough. The cost is \$360 per year or \$30 per month. After a short discussion, the Council agreed to the service.

**Newsletter**

Mayor Bivona noted that the Environmental Committee has \$10,000 set aside for newsletter and communications related cost. He supports a strong communication presence and said they should try to do more along those lines. Mr. Hart estimated that \$5,000 would cover the cost of one newsletter and the subsequent mailing. There had been a suggestion to explore advertising in the newsletter. Mayor Bivona said that the Ridgewood calendar has all pertinent information printed on the annual calendar along with advertising which probably covers printing and distribution costs. Mr. Hart recalled that about two years ago a similar calendar along with a homeowner handbook was ready to go out; however, it was stopped.

Mayor Bivona reiterated his support for better communications via mailings because he doesn't think all that many people use the Borough website. The \$5,000 to be used by the Environmental Committee was related to recycling but Mayor Bivona said that it could be used for a newsletter type of communication. Mr. Hart said that he prepared the last newsletter by himself in-house without using a printing company and this probably saved \$2,000. Councilman Smith suggested that the \$5,000 in the Environmental budget should be transferred into the administrative budget resulting in a total of \$10,000 budgeted for communications and more specifics will be discussed next month.

**Mayor and Council Salaries**

Councilman Friscia suggested that the salaries for the Mayor and Councilmembers be left in the budget. This item can be re-visited at the end of the budget process.

**Construction**

Mr. Hart said that this is an estimated number for some structural work including portable partitions. Councilman Pedone suggested that they explore the idea of looking at companies in town that may be getting rid of items that could be used in Borough Hall.

**Police**

Mr. Hart reported that a new patrol officer is being proposed. Previously there was an extra person in the traffic bureau and this would supplement man power on the road. Councilman Pedone remarked that he was surprised at the amount of police overtime in the Municipal Court which doesn't seem to be covered by the revenue that is taken in via tickets. Mayor Bivona said that having the police at Municipal Court is required for security. Overtime for the police department is directly related to the number of vacation days, sick days, holidays and personal days accrued by officers and the fact that there are two cars on the road at all times. The question is whether the overtime of \$150,000 justifies the hiring of an officer who would be paid \$52,000 not including benefits. Mayor Bivona concluded that the answer is no. Police in Franklin Lakes work in 12 hour shifts which contributes to more overtime than would be the case with an 8 hour shift. Mr. Hart

commented that because this is a negotiating year he would not recommend that this is the time to add a new employee. The thinking is that the Borough cannot afford higher salaries and adding manpower would be inconsistent. Councilman Smith strongly agreed and this will be removed from the budget.

Councilwoman Lota said that she is bothered by the fact that a police officer has to man the dispatch desk if the dispatcher calls in sick. The police officer is more likely receiving overtime pay and Mr. Hart said that this is the problem with having only one dispatcher. Mayor Bivona asked for an update on Central Dispatch and Mr. Hart reported that Central Dispatch requires a Letter of Intent stating that the Borough wants to submit a proposal. He noted that there are many factors that would have to be considered before going to a Central Dispatch system but there are definite cost savings.

Mayor Bivona said that the Police Department Secretary could possibly handle the dispatching job between 8:30 A.M. and 4:30 P.M. but it might be necessary to have an officer in the police building after that even with Central Dispatch. Councilman Pedone recalled that he had mentioned at an earlier meeting the possibility of using "Class I" and "Class II" Police Officers from the Police Academy. The Class I are contracted and not paid. They work hours which are dictated by the Borough and don't carry guns. Class II carry guns and are paid \$15,000 annually. Mr. Hart said that this is a substantial area for savings but the logistics need to be studied.

Mayor Bivona stated that many of the Northwest Bergen mayors dislike the idea of Central Dispatch because there is no one in the police station to handle walk-ins. He added that dispatchers provide various other services. Mr. Hart said that the County has become less aggressive about providing the Central Dispatch service due to the change of administration and may not be able to take on other towns very quickly.

### **Police Vehicles**

Mr. Hart stated that the police department proposes the replacement of three high mileage vehicles. There are several other vehicles with approximately 40,000 miles on them that are projected to have 60,000 miles by next year. Councilmembers agreed that it might be logical to replace two vehicles with the highest mileage each year. Mr. Hart mentioned that these prices are for fully equipped cars.

### **Shotguns for Bears**

Mayor Bivona said that these are guns with rubber bullets and the police are asking for one gun per police vehicle. Councilmembers decided to budget for one gun and revisit the issue next year.

### **Stipends for Officers in the Fire Department**

Councilmember Smith reported that he will be meeting with the fire company and the Fire Chief on Monday. At that time, he will also review financial statements. Mayor Bivona noted that the Fire Department does their own fundraising and he wondered if the Borough could sponsor a fund raising effort for funds to improve the firehouses so that the money doesn't have to come out of the capital fund. He said that money needs to be put into improvements such as the repair of leaky roofs, improving undersized bays, and the addition of a new exhaust system. Councilman Smith stated that the plans and analysis for these improvements will cost \$25,000 to \$50,000 with an eventual cost of between \$.5 and \$1 million. Mayor Bivona reiterated that a \$1 million fundraiser sponsored by the Borough is the best way to handle this.

Mr. Hart said that the stipends for officers would cover the significant clerical work that they perform. He believes in providing administrative support; however, it could be done for less than \$9,500. Regarding the Fireman's Convention, Mr. Hart did a survey of whether or not other towns cover the cost and concluded that the majority of the towns do not. This is why they decided not to fund anything last year.

Mr. Hart reported that he is considering a joint bid for the physicals for firefighters. Wyckoff has handled this through a bid process at a cost \$175 per member and there is also the question of whether or not physicals are needed for those in the department who are never dispatched into a fire. Most other towns polled by Mr. Hart provide physicals under the FIT testing and it may be legally required.

Mr. Hart said that the Fire Department is hoping for \$84,000 in stipends this year or \$1,500 for each member. Last year, \$39,000 was expended. After some discussion, Mr. Hart suggested that \$20,000 in stipends be added to bring the amount to \$60,000. This number would be subject to change pending Councilman Smith's discussions.

### **Road Repair – DPW Software**

Mr. Hart said that this is long overdue and is a system geared specifically towards Public Works. There are different modules including service requests, work orders, fleet maintenance and asset management. Mayor Bivona asked who would manage the system and Mr. Hart said that it would be a combination of Nancy Durkin, Rich Lilienthal and Brian Peterson. This has been requested by the DPW for several years. Mr. Hart noted that the asset management feature compiles a list of Borough streets, roads, bridges, signs, culverts and a GIS element through GPS co-ordinates. This is a web based system that would be a very helpful and he recommended that it be added to the budget. Councilwoman Lota agreed, however, Mayor Bivona said his only concern is whether it would actually be used. Councilman Smith indicated that he would like to visit a DPW in a town where it is being used before making a decision and Mr. Hart agreed. Mr. Hart said that it is important to have a web based software system that works Borough-wide on service request issues that are more DPW specific. Councilmembers agreed to a commitment and appropriation for the system.

### **Memorial Pond Maintenance**

Mr. Hart reported that the DPW has asked for \$7,000 for additional Memorial Pond maintenance. This is the tenth anniversary of September 11<sup>th</sup> and a contractor would be paid to help the DPW keep the park in good condition and well maintained. Mr. Hart said that the park requires a lot of maintenance due to the types of plantings; however, he suspects it is more a matter of not having enough time to devote to the maintenance. Councilwoman Lota said that she did not agree with hiring a contractor to help with the maintenance and the other Councilmembers agreed.

Mayor Bivona remarked that the September 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary event is being planned by two Franklin Lakes residents and they may be doing a fundraiser to cover expenses. He has been told that landscaping is being donated. He has spoken with the DPW who have indicated that the big issue is the future of the park and Mr. Hart noted that maintaining the park has been the issue since its inception. After more discussion, Councilmembers decided to remove this request from the budget.

### **Cable TV – Community Bulletin Board**

Mr. Hart explained that this is \$5,000 which has been set aside from Cablevision in order to get a Community Bulletin Board up and running on the two web channels. This is not a budget issue because this is existing money.

### **DeCotiis Bills**

Mr. Hart recommended that money not be set aside for this purpose.

### **Planning Board Recording Secretary**

Mr. Hart said the possibility of reconfiguring the Construction Department is being considered. Maria Berardi would be relieved from the job of preparing Planning Board minutes and someone would be hired to prepare these minutes at a rate of \$200 to \$275. This amount would be subject to discussion. This new arrangement would give Ms. Berardi time to provide support in the Construction Office. Mayor Bivona said that this

solution answers the long standing request for more staff by the Building Department. He added that construction fees were up by \$134,000 last year which warrants more help in this department.

Mr. Hart summed up stating that he will have an updated list for next week's meeting which will be attended by Borough Auditor Dieter Lerch. He anticipates that the budget could be introduced on February 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjournment**

Councilwoman Lota made a motion, seconded by Councilman Pedone to adjourn the meeting at 9:52 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature and name of the official. Below the box, the text "Borough Auditor" is partially visible.