

**TOWNSHIP OF PEMBERTON
SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING
MARCH 9, 2015
6:30 P.M.**

FLAG SALUTE

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

Council President Allen announced that the purpose of this meeting was to discuss the 2015 Municipal Budget as presented by the Mayor.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Sherry Scull
Diane Stinney
Norma Trueblood
Letha Jackson
Jason Allen

ABSENT

Also present: Business Administrator Dennis Gonzalez, and Deputy Township Clerk Sunshine Dashiell.

CALL TO ORDER

Council President Allen called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Council President Allen welcomed all and advised that this would be Council's second workshop for the proposed 2015 Municipal Budget. Advised that the Council would now review the budget and asked if Council had any questions from the previous Budget Meeting.

Councilwoman Stinney asked Mr. Gonzalez if they got the \$2,000.00 added to the line item agreed to for the Police Chief. Mr. Gonzalez advised that the new document provided includes the reduction in the Tax Collector's salary and the increase to the Police Chief's salary. Added that other numbers included in this document are the insertions into the budget that were discussed previously, so totals in a number of areas will be different as the calculations are different, but it does not increase the reserve for uncollected taxes or the anticipated tax levy.

Council President Allen advised that Council had received the 2014 Recreation Program Fee Based Detail Report from Township Clerk, Amy Cosnoski. Stated he did crunch the number and sees that they received \$64,361.66 from the fee based programs. Commented that at the last Budget Meeting a resident stood up and questioned the other pay, and the \$11,000 was for officers that performed the Officer in Charge Program. Stated there was also another part of the budget that had other pay in Public Works, and he was informed by the Township Clerk that this was a similar situation where they get bumped and work out of their title. Advised that any miscellaneous items were for various things such as, refreshments during seminars and community clean ups as well as other minor things that do not fit into any particular category.

Councilwoman Stinney asked the Administrator, that if he could, for the record, clarify the amount of cars being purchased for the Police Department. Mr. Gonzalez advised that there are two police cars along with accessories, in the budget in the other expense line item of the budget and the Mayor had indicated at some point they will be coming back to the Council with a request to bond a variety of things to include equipment and materials for the Public Works Road Program and also a recommendation for two additional Police SUV's. Councilwoman Stinney asked if the bonding was what Councilwoman Scull was talking about at the last meeting. Also stated that she had asked the Mayor for a calculation of the savings, which he did give a brief summary of, for the Road Program and asked Mr. Gonzalez to remind him.

Council President Allen asked Mr. Gonzalez if there is a plan for next year to increase revenue. Mr. Gonzalez stated that if he is asking about any plans other than what can be anticipated in the budget, they remain hopeful that the Danitom housing project will close. Stated that last year they anticipated a portion of the proceeds of that property sale, but it has not closed so they are continuing to work with the developer and they have a meeting

this Friday, with the Township Engineers as well, to work through a few final issues and is hopeful they will close some time this summer but cannot anticipate those funds anymore. Stated that if they close this summer they will end up with about \$270,000 in the initial year of unanticipated revenue which would be good for next year. Commented that if it closes then there will be an additional \$330,000 of revenue for 2016 and 2017. Council President Allen asked if outside of this sale is there any other plans for things to generate revenue. Mr. Gonzalez added that the only thing that he has been working on is evaluating the other small pieces of property that the Township owns and ultimately at some point they will have an ordinance before Council to authorize a land sale auction for property that they do not need for public purposes.

Councilwoman Stinney asked Mr. Gonzalez about the bonds and questioned if they could have a Bond Committee Review Board and noted there was in the past a board to review various community projects and it acted as an ear to listen to the community. Mr. Gonzalez advised he would share this suggestion with the Mayor.

Councilwoman Scull stated she had a few questions in regard to the Recreation Program. Councilwoman Scull questioned if any consideration has been given to reduce the costs for running the Elementary Summer Recreation Program, noting she believes it is a great program but that is the one the Township is funding the most. Discussion ensued on the fees for the program previously being raised and Administration advised they are open to any suggestions of the Council. Councilwoman Jackson noted that if fees were increased it would decrease the attendance. Councilwoman Scull they did raise the fees years ago because residents were upset over feeling they were paying for other people's children to be babysat and she does not feel that is the case and feels the program benefits the town. Council President Allen noted that Recreation has done a great job in bringing in money, noting they have 51 recreation programs with 26 being fee based and 25 with no fee. Councilwoman Trueblood noted that 95% of the employees for the summer program are Township residents and Councilwoman Scull noted this means the money is coming back into the community. Councilwoman Stinney noted she would recommend adding money to the recreation programs. Discussion ensued on possible grants for the Recreation Department and it was noted that the Recreation Department is always looking for funding sources and is very active in applying for and receiving grants. Councilwoman Scull clarified that she was not insinuating that the Recreation Department is babysitting but was stating that is the attitude of some of the residents and noted that the Recreation Department provides a lot of things to do in Pemberton Township, although many complain there is nothing in town, she did note that transportation is an issue. Councilwoman Stinney commented on the benefits of the Recreation Department and the Early Childhood programs in the township and noted the benefits are not debatable.

Councilwoman Scull stated that she has spent a lot of time home snowed in and going through the budget looking for areas to be cut out and maybe shave even a penny off of the tax, especially in legal. Commented that even though the budget was over expended last year in that area Administration is not asking for a raise there. Advised she looked at group medical and they paid \$2.5 million dollars last year and they are asking for \$2.4 million dollars this year which makes her leery that this is possibly under it will be pulled from elsewhere. Stated she really cannot find anywhere they can cut money except to cut positions and they have already done that in the past. Stated she has no recommendation to change anything at this point. Noted that the standard recommendation is to have a 5% surplus, but we have less than 2%. Councilwoman Scull expressed she is not happy with an increase and she pays taxes on two properties, but she does not see anywhere cuts can be made.

Councilwoman Trueblood stated she looked at the same thing and said she is thankful for Recreation and the totals even with the grants helping. Noted she looked at salaries and healthcare and she too does not see any service that can be cut to lower this and feels the same way.

Councilwoman Jackson stated she doesn't want to tell anyone that they don't have a job.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council President Allen opened the meeting up to general public comments. Those commenting were:

Norma Waters, Pemberton Heights - 1. Prepared a statement and handed it out to all of Council. Commented on the election of the Mayor and Council and the need

for them to be strong and lead us to a better place and have less finger pointing. **2.** Commented on the drainage issues and fixing the potholes and the use of a possible pothole hotline. Noted that prospective home buyers or business owners should have a smooth and inviting view and ride into town but instead we are embarrassed by lousy streets. **3.** Asked for the Browns Mills Shopping Center to be cleaned up and for strong incentives to be provided to any stable company such as Wawa to anchor that area. **4.** Commented on settling disputes with the Police union and allowing for a more civilized and secure environment. **5.** Gave an overview of what the town of Pemberton is and that she has fallen and can't get up with full responsibility resting on this Council and this Administration. **6.** Commented on letting certain grants go because we can not afford to match funds and buying only 2 police cars instead of 4. **7.** Stated we all want to be proud of where we live and we must invest in rebuilding not only our infrastructure but the trust, pride and spirit throughout the community.

Rick Prickett, Pemberton - 1. Stated that we truly have wonderful employees that do remarkable things throughout the town. Commented on the outstanding departments and programs that all require funding. **2.** Stated he made a list of all of the endless recreation facilities we are so lucky to have so many beautiful programs, buildings, parks and beaches. Commented that the Train Station was a beautiful recreation facility along with the Rails for Trails. **3.** Commented on generating revenue by decreasing debt and the amount paid in interest and principal. Councilwoman Scull noted they have had many discussions about the debt and advised they consolidated some debt not long ago at a cheaper interest rate and hopes they can pay for the additional two police vehicles within the budget rather than borrow.

Council President Allen stated to Mr. Gonzalez that at the last meeting, and again tonight, Mr. Prickett asked how many buildings the Township is responsible for, and asked if he could give that information to the Township Clerk to distribute to Council.

Jack Tompkins, Pemberton Heights - 1. Commented that he has talked previously about salaries and Township employees making more than retired military. Stated that as a taxpayer he is paying these salaries and he is living on retirement pay and will now have to pay more in taxes as well. **2.** Brought up the Early School program and said he thinks it is phenomenal. Stated his daughter went so he believes in these programs and knows they work. Stated he believes that parents should supplement some of the costs for this and the summer programs just as he had to. Explained how the military did the same thing based off of your income. Councilwoman Jackson stated they do this for the summer recreation program but she is not aware about the rest. **3.** Commented he has no problem with buying Police cars as he supports the Police and thinks they are phenomenal. Commented he was confused by the amount of Police cars from the previous Council meeting. Council President Allen explained that (2) are line items for \$70,000. Mr. Tompkins stated that he wanted to be sure that what was already approved was in the budget and that they are not borrowing something already looked at. **4.** Concerned about the bond or loan being used for Police cars and road program as well as equipment needed. Stated that in his opinion this is just one way around the 2% cap and that these should be in the budget and funded, not a loan that needs to be paid off. Commented that if it goes above the 2% it should then be brought to a vote so the voters can decide. Stated the Council is well meaning but feels the voters should make the decision. **5.** Stated he has noticed at the meetings that when this is brought up it is money already spent or has been obligated so now Council has to approve it or they will get sued. Noted if they approve a \$1 million dollar bond the money will get spent and they will have no control over it and it will be gone. **6.** Councilwoman Stinney asked Mr. Tompkins to explain the information he sent in his email regarding the purchase of police cars through GSA (Government Service of America). Mr. Tompkins explained purchasing through GSA and the potential savings over State Contract Purchases. Mr. Gonzalez noted he is not sure they could get the vehicle they are looking for through that program but would have the Chief look into it.

Clare Wadsworth, Browns Mills - 1. Questioned a revenue item in the amount of \$343,000.00 referenced in the Mayor's Budget letter and what was done with it. It was noted it was put in the budget and used on repayment of debt. **2.** Questioned the \$6,000.00 being paid to the Pemberton EMS as part of the agreement for the building and if it included any legal fees and if the amount was in the budget. Mr. Gonzalez advised that he would answer questions not related to the budget at the

next Council meeting and Councilwoman Scull advised the money would have to be in the budget. **3.** Commented on Council noting not being able to find any places to cut in the budget but were given a great suggestion by Mr. Prickett on how to make cuts. **4.** Commented on the borrowing of almost \$2,000,000.00 for this year, along with the biggest tax increase they have ever approved and questioned what next year would bring. Commented on not borrowing money for the ball fields but for roadways and the Old Acme to encourage people to come to the town. **5.** Noted that in her research of the other 42 municipalities in Burlington County and all have increased in population with the exception of one town and asked Council if anyone could guess who that was. Councilwoman Stinney stated that she assumes that it is our job market that has failed, the downsizing of the base and the transportation issues as all of this has had a great impact on our town. Noted she sat in on the Superintendent search and these were the things that she had heard, no one wants to come here now because of access issues and these are just her personal opinions. Ms. Wadsworth stated that she would also assume the same things and asked that Council spend money more wisely. **6.** Stated that all she hears is about the Faulkner Act and the Council having no power, noting it is not the \$95 more a year per \$100,000.00 it is what they are going to do with it.

Councilwoman Stinney commented on a meeting she had with Congressman McArthur's aide regarding the needs of Pemberton Township and noted they could work with the Economic Development Authority to help analyze what can be done with the shopping center. Suggested the Congressman's representative make a presentation to Council and the community.

Ms. Wadsworth added she is sure Wrightstown was affected by the base but their population has increased as well as New Egypt. Stated she would welcome anyone who would come here and give advice on how they can grow their Township. Stated that if she believes Council had approved about \$180,000 for the Planner to do that not too long ago and nothing has changed, noting it was more money not spent wisely.

Jack Tompkins, Pemberton Heights - 1. Commented that the Joint Base has grown substantially since its original draw down and the base is thriving. Councilwoman Stinney noted she was just commenting on a rumor she had heard and Councilwoman Scull advised the town has not fully recovered from the first realignment of the base and used the student loss impact at the schools as an example. Councilwoman Scull further commented on starting the Live Where you Work program but only knows of one person that took advantage of that. Mr. Tompkins noted that the military recommend incoming personnel to go to North Hanover. Discussion ensued on the benefits of Pemberton Township schools. It was noted that Mayor Patriarca meets with the Base Commander and continues to communicate with them on a variety of matters affecting the Township.

Councilwoman Scull asked if they could get an explanation on what the repayment of debt is and where it came from. Mr. Gonzalez advised he would provide it to Council.

Anne Quinn, Country Lakes - 1. Commented when she moved here almost 15 years ago the schools were some of the best in the State and part of what attracted her to town. **2.** Commented on the Hungry Piney closing due to no economic base. **3.** Commented on being willing to volunteer along with others to help the town's economic base. **4.** Commented on the School Budget and advised on the meeting and discussion. **5.** Asked Council to look at what they are borrowing and adding to the debt. **6.** Commented on looking into the GSA purchase program suggested by Mr. Tompkins. **7.** Commented the Council can put specifics on line items and tell the Mayor how to spend. **8.** Noted her surprise the Council tabled the Police Department ordinance. **9.** Noted as a taxpayer she has the right to know where every penny is going and Council should also know. **10.** Commented on the Willow Grove Base closure and she does not accept Administration's explanations on economic development and has not seen any job growth. **11.** Questioned the tax breaks given to the Township when the new ACME was built and asked if those tax breaks were given to DaVita. Councilwoman Scull advised she does not remember voting on any. **12.** Commented on the powers of Council and might try being one. Noting she does not have all the answers, but she has heard some simple common sense suggestions that no one can understand why they were not raised until now. **13.** Commented on the Township not being a dictatorship. **14.** Stated the Council should not approve this budget. **15.** Commented on the lack of redevelopment and

the debt and does not think there should be raises given until she sees a return on her investment.

Councilwoman Stinney requested Administration to looking into the roads that are not being plowed and asked if a survey could be put on the website for residents to comment about the plowing done this winter. Councilwoman Jackson requested if the website could note which roads are County roads and it was noted that is already on the website as well as the GIS system information.

Ms. Quinn stated that she is not saying that the Township workers don't work hard but what she has seen in the last 2 years is not what she used to see, noting the last thing she wants is anyone losing their job, but if cuts have to be made to buy down their debt in order to have the money to buy things instead of borrowing money than that is what needs to be done. Commented on the lack of jobs in town and noted she sat down with the Mayor but gets generic answers.

Eric Howen, North Pemberton Rd. - 1. Commented on the terrible potholes. **2.** Commented on the new position and requested the title and were the duties ones that are already being handled and if so, we do not need it. Council President Allen advised it was for a Department Director and the duties are currently being handled by several employees. Councilwoman Scull advised that it is not really a position and the duties are currently being handled by the Mayor and Administrator and this may not necessarily be another paid position and the ordinance was tabled at this time due to the issues between the Police Department and Administration. **3.** Commented it appears they want to add things to the budget and it appears they are trying to hide what money is being spent and it will come to light. **4.** Advised of govdeals.com where you can buy used items from other towns that are fine, noting however that Police Cars should be new. **5.** Commented on the tax abatements for ACME and it was noted that was done way before this Council. Mr. Howen commented on learning from past mistakes. **6.** Commented on the opening up of auto parts stores and dollar stores with minimum wage salaries. **7.** Suggested the Town gets creative in finding solutions. **8.** Commented on his hockey team rising from being ranked 65th to 8th out of 137 teams in the State because they hold the kids accountable and teach them life lessons so they will be active participants in their community and can contribute. **9.** Stated you cannot keep changing your paradigm to fit your situation you have to change your situation to fit your paradigm. **10.** Commented on what he has heard about Mr. Gonzalez and does not know if it is well deserved based on his actions tonight. **11.** Commented on the Early Childhood Center and providing this service to the community, but it is meant for people to be able to go out and work and be contributing members of society. **12.** Stated we need quality jobs and not just minimum wage jobs. **13.** Commented on too much money being spent on lawsuits. **14.** Commented on how his debt ratio works and questioned how it works with the municipality. Mr. Gonzalez advised the Township is allowed to borrow up to a certain amount determined by the State and further noted we are below this amount but he is not sure by exactly how much. **15.** Mr. Howen stated he guesses that when it comes to raising the citizens taxes Council needs to ask themselves, is this something they need or want and have they exhausted all other options. Stated people should not expect to get rich off of these jobs and should expect that if there are difficult times there may need to be cutbacks. **16.** Quoted Richard Pryor and said, "you don't get old by being a fool and you don't get rich by spending foolishly", thinks if we need another bond we are spending foolishly.

George Petronis, Browns Mills - 1. Commented the GSA is a valuable resource if you use it right. **2.** Noted that we would be much better off if there were things happening in this town especially if businesses were being moved in. Commented that he served on the Browns Mills Redevelopment Committee and it seemed to be a productive effort but has since been terminated. **3.** Asked if it is possible to have a dedicated increase that would be used this year and the next few years that was locked into a specific purpose. It was noted that you are not allowed to do that in the State of New Jersey. **4.** Stated his concern over funding the road program and how much would have to be borrowed each year. It was noted that you are not allowed to do have dedicated increases in the State of New Jersey, however Council can put money in a specific line item and Administration is limited to the purpose of that line item, but money can be transferred. Mr. Petronis stated that even if the decision was made to use the money for this purpose this year it would not be guaranteed for next year. Mr. Gonzalez explained how the budget process worked

and how the money is allocated to be spent and the limitations that come with that.

Seeing no other residents wishing to be heard, Council President Allen closed the meeting to public comment.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilwoman Jackson – Questioned if Administration had looked into the GSA and if savings were found could they use it. Mr. Gonzalez advised the budget is a spending plan and does not dictate specific expenditures, noting all purchases above \$2,000.00 come before Council for authorization and there is a bill list at every meeting for them to authorize. Mr. Gonzalez further noted that the budget does not include an additional \$1,000,000.00 in debt, rather the \$50,000.00 down payment and any bonding would have to come before Council for further approval. Councilwoman Jackson questioned what types of businesses the Mayor has spoken with regarding redevelopment. Mr. Gonzalez advised that he, the Mayor and the Director of Community Development have talked to a number of developers about a large variety of businesses and noted they are as hopeful and wishful as everyone else in the room to bring businesses into town but it is not as easy as some may think.

Councilwoman Stinney – Questioned if there were any programs still available to help distressed businesses and Mr. Gonzalez advised that if any business is in need of assistance they can contact him or Mr. Benedetti and they can guide them to programs that can help them depending on their circumstances.

Councilwoman Scull – Commented on the reasons for the Hungry Pine closing, noting she heard it was due to the owner's inability to procure products at the cheaper price that the other businesses in town were through a consortium. Noted it is sad that she is closing but she did not state it was because her taxes were too high. Commented on Peebles changing their pricing to better suit the town and people need to start going back in there. Commented on the School Budgets, noting they passed for many years, noting it is currently not voted on by the tax payers as long as it stays under the 2% cap. Noted that regarding the employee's salaries, that the employees now pay a huge percentage of their insurance costs and that money goes back into the budget. Commented on the road program and purchasing the correct equipment and they are saving a lot of money, and noted hopefully the program will get better and the drainage problems will be addressed by the Engineer.

Council President Allen - Asked Mr. Gonzalez when it was anticipated that the road work would start back up. Mr. Gonzalez advised that as soon as the asphalt plants open the plan is to do about 35,000 linear feet of roads which is about 6.5 miles. Stated there are about 14 roads that have already been selected and a few that the Engineers are looking at for drainage. Stated that this is in addition to the 14 locations that they have on a short list to deal with including Tennessee Trail .

Councilwoman Scull commented that Cherokee Drive is horrible. Mr. Gonzalez advised that there are 14 considered to be the most critical and that a few will take just a couple of days and a few that will take 10-14 days to complete. Noted that at the next Council meeting there will be a resolution to shift asphalt money over to purchase some drainage boxes to start this which they will be able to start sooner than the paving program. Councilwoman Scull added that the County was out filling potholes on Rt. 537 at 5:30pm last night and asked if our Public Works Department was out doing the same. Mr. Gonzalez stated that now that the weather is turning he will check and let the Clerk's office know.

Councilwoman Stinney - Asked if the website still had something in place to report potholes. Mr. Gonzalez advised that it is still on the webpage and advised that people can go through the website, call Public Works or call Administration and they will forward the location information to Public Works. Councilwoman Stinney asked Mr. Gonzalez if he could announce this at the next Council Meeting as well to make people aware it is there for them to use. Mr. Gonzalez advised that he would and unfortunately there is not much that can be done with a cold weather patch, advising you have to go back for a more detailed repair.

Councilwoman Trueblood - Commented that 1-2 years ago Public Works supervisor came with a plan to train the employees to learn this equipment because it would be cost effective. Noted that she saw Public Works out today by Turtle Log

picking up debris and she observed them. Stating that the presentation was such an impact because of their training and learning from other Townships that were willing to train them which she believes was very cost effective for the town. Mr. Gonzalez stated she is absolutely right and they have a great deal to be thankful for to Cinnaminson as they were the ones instrumental in allowing us to observe them. Commented that they had their program for over 10 years and in fact sent our employees to train with them. Noted that Burlington City folks were here today as they asked about our progress as they are looking into doing a road program as well.

Councilwoman Jackson - Commented to Mr. Gonzalez that Mr. Prickett had brought up the vacant property fees and what they were spent on and asked if he could answer this. Mr. Gonzalez advised that the fees, with the respect to vacant properties, comes into the budget as general revenue, so it is not dedicated for any particular purpose and if you look at the revenue section of the proposed budget you will see an approximate \$250,000.00 amount and last year he believes they collected approximately \$226,000.00.

Councilwoman Stinney - Asked Council President Allen if they could get a request over to Administration for a detailed, up to date letter about the Browns Mills Shopping Center and where we are going from here. Council President Allen said it is a good idea and suggested getting a request to the Township Clerk and having her circulate it to the rest of Council after Administration provides their response.

Council President Allen asked if there were any other comments or suggestions from Council. Advised that if *the* budget was introduced at this meeting the public hearing would be at the Council Meeting on April 15th and that the adoption could be no later than May 6th. Mr. Gonzalez reminded that once there is an introduction everything is printed out and then is delivered to the Division of Local Government Services, noting that even though there is a scheduled public hearing, the budget can not be adopted until approval is received by DCA and they advise when the budget can be adopted. Discussion ensued on possible amendments to the budget and the votes needed, it was noted it depends on the amount of the change and if it increases or decrease. Councilwoman Scull stated that even if the budget is introduced it doesn't necessarily mean they are approving \$1,000,000.00 in bonding and doesn't mean that it will automatically be approved. Mr. Gonzalez added that even adopting the budget as presented does not in fact mean that you are borrowing \$1,000,000.00. Council President Allen added that a motion to increase would need 4 votes and a motion to decrease would need 3 votes.

Council President Allen asked Council how they would like to proceed.

Motion by Jackson and Trueblood to introduce the 2015 Municipal Budget as Resolution No. 76-2015 with a Public Hearing on April 15, 2015. Jackson, yes; Trueblood, yes; Stinney, yes; Scull, yes; Allen, yes. Motion carried.

Councilwoman Stinney thanked Council President Allen for a good meeting and receiving the public's comments and she appreciates him conducting the meeting that he did.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Sunshine Dashiell

Sunshine Dashiell, Deputy Township Clerk