

**TOWNSHIP OF PEMBERTON
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING
MARCH 19, 2016**

Council President Allen called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT:

Council Members: Kenneth Cartier, Letha Jackson, Jack Tompkins, Norma Trueblood and Jason Allen; Mayor Patriarca, CFO, Robert Benick and Deputy Township Clerk, Sunshine Dashiell.

Council President Allen advised that today's meeting was for the discussion of the 2016 Municipal Budget and that formal action may be taken.

PRESENTATION

Mayor Patriarca advised that we would be foregoing the presentation as it has been put on the Township website for review and identifies changes between this year and last.

DISCUSSION FOR 2016 MUNICIPAL BUDGET

Council President Allen advised Council has had the budget for a few weeks and stated that the proposed budget is \$23,000,557.84 and the 2015 final budget was \$23,706,763.84. Council President Allen then asked if Council had any questions or ideas.

Councilman Cartier advised that he would like to hear the Mayor's proposed Capital Budget.

Mayor Patriarca stated that Administration hopes to be coming to Council for the purchase of a backhoe machine and a street sweeper and that these were the only planned purchases at this time. Mayor Patriarca reminded that Council had recently approved resolutions for the sweeper services. Advised on the various projects the Township will be able to accomplish by having this machine to include maintaining the storm water outfalls and the seepage pits. Explained how the machine works and how the storm water is maintained. Noted they are a very important tool within their system. Noted they have been getting prices and they are running anywhere from, a tow behind system at \$150,000.00 to a complete drive system at \$250,000.00 to \$300,000.00. Commented that Administration will probably come to Council with a proposed Road Program at the end of the year as he feels what they have now will get us through most of the year on road paving, but they do like to stay ahead for the coming new year.

Councilman Cartier asked how long they have had the existing backhoe. Mayor Patriarca advised it has been here longer than he has been. Councilman Cartier asked what the life expectancy was for the machine. Mayor Patriarca advised he did not have this off the top of his head and will provide when they come to Council for purchase.

Council President Allen stated that in the Budget Message the Mayor had mentioned the revenue issues we are experiencing and asked if we are looking into ways to generate revenue for the future years. Mayor Patriarca advised that you are limited as to where revenue comes from. Stated we cannot hold fundraisers as it is not a club or organization. Noted we are limited to permitting fees, different State aid's that come in and basically the tax base. Stated that we utilize the taxpayers as basically a user fee for what we provide in services. Noted that most of our tax base comes from residential taxes and if we could increase our commercial or industrial use in the town then we could relieve some of the taxpayer burden. Commented that they have been trying to market the town for business and commercial use but have had very little movement.

Council President Allen stated that under the Public Defender tab we are requesting \$6,000.00 more than last year and questioned what the reason was. Robert Benick advised that we routinely get reimbursed by the Municipal Court for this so revenue comes in and it is offset back and forth. Stated that the Court funds a good part of this but in 2015 we spent over \$24,000.00 and he does not want to run short or put too much into this trust fund. Noted he was squeaking by and not being able to pay the bills at the end of December

because he only had \$6,000.00 to add additional funding. Stated it is not that he is going to spend this money but does not want to run short.

Councilman Tompkins commented on the Capital Improvements and asked for clarification on the cost of the backhoe. Mayor Patriarca stated it would depend on what was decided for the backhoe. Advised on the different types of systems, what the State and County are using and how they function. Noted there is a large difference in price and they will look to use the lower if it will work best for the town. Stated that they have a routine system and noted that Council could review the schedule to see how often they are out and how often it is being used. Stated that we have to show that we are keeping the storm water system and show where the waste is being dumped. Advised that it is basically a large wet-dry vacuum. Noted it can also be used by the MUA if they have a clog in their pipes that needs to be jetted out. Commented that we have been asked by other towns for assistance and have sent our unit to help other towns.

Councilman Tompkins commented on the roads and asphalt and the Capital Improvement bond for last year. Noted his feelings are not to borrow money to maintain our roads and feels it should be included in the annual budget. Asked the Mayor to guess how much money will be spent this year. Mayor Patriarca stated he would guess at least \$400,000.00 at this point, in asphalt. Noted they are trying to do anywhere from 4-6 miles of road per year and this year they have some large projects to include Ridgeview Avenue and Hunter Boulevard.

Councilman Tompkins agreed that the roads need to be done and maintained. Stated he had come to Mr. Gonzalez about a dirt road that needs grading regularly and thought that it might be more cost effective to pave the road instead of grading it every few months. Mayor Patriarca stated that might be possible depending on where it is at as paving is very difficult in the Pinelands. Stated that when they did Whites Boggs Road there were various hoops they had to jump through with Pinelands to get that done. Noted that it does not matter if it is developed or not, that when going through Pinelands it is difficult.

Councilman Tompkins stated his big issue is possibly looking at \$600,000.00 to \$800,000.000 bond again this year and the interest that will incur over the next 20 years or so. Stated he would like to have this as a budgeted item instead of borrowing every year. Mayor Patriarca stated he does not disagree with Councilman Tompkins and is not a big fan of borrowing money if we do not have to but noted that you have to look at the other side of that equation. Stated to put \$600,000.00 into the budget you will be increasing the budget by roughly \$.07 cents. Commented that if you bonded you could maybe increase the debt payment by a half of a cent. Stated you have to look to see what the residents can accept, can they pay out an extra \$100.00 or can they put out an extra \$6.00 per year. Noted it is no different then buying a house or a car and knowing what your budget will allow. Stated there have been times when they have budgeted for larger things and it worked out, but stated that when you get to larger ticket items it can get challenging.

Councilman Tompkins stated it is getting more and more difficult by adding more and more debt to the budget process. Council President Allen noted that we are still spending down on our debt. Mayor Patriarca agreed and the debt is holding stable at about \$27 million dollars. Councilman Tompkins questioned if this included the water and everything. Mayor Patriarca advised that the Water Division holds it's own and is stable. Councilman Tompkins stated that the entire municipal debt is around \$32 million dollars. Mayor Patriarca stated that he is including the water debt and MUA debt. Councilman Tompkins stated that if they were to default the taxpayers would be held accountable for this. Mayor Patriarca advised that these divisions are revenue generating divisions not tax divisions. Stated that these divisions charge for the services they provide. Noted that the division sends out a bill and the resident pays that bill.

Councilman Tompkins stated that he does not remember hearing the MUA ask for a bond approval in recent history. Mayor Patriarca stated that you also haven't seen the MUA do any infrastructure projects either which is a concern he has. Noted that the MUA is not doing major projects like the Water Division is. Commented that their system is failing and they are repairing breaks that are happening but are not doing major infrastructure projects such as replacing all the old lines so they do not have these breaks. Noted that we are going out in the Water Division putting new mains in all throughout the town so that we do not have this problem going forward and it is being done within the budget.

Councilman Tompkins stated that we had just done a \$1 million dollar bond for Well #11.

Mayor Patriarca stated that is for a specific system that needed a specific treatment facility and noted he is talking about infrastructures such as mains, valves and all of the interconnections that are taken care of in house and noted these are things that should be getting done at the MUA. Stated we have to charge the taxpayers for the services that we are providing and generate revenue from that which is from the tax levy which is about \$14 million dollars this year. Noted that things we are required to provide are hard to put in the budget such as the roads because they go well above our 2% cap margin. Commented they then have to find ways to work within that including in smaller debt payments that we can manage within the budget that do not impact. Stated he knows it is not the best way to go but tells everyone to show him another way. Stated it is one thing to say do something different and another thing to come and show him how. Noted he does not say he knows all the answers but it is difficult. Stated if you take from one side of the equation you have to be able to take from the other side and if you are willing to make the sacrifice then there are consequences and something will have to go away.

Councilwoman Jackson questioned if the bonding that we keep doing is keeping the residents taxes down. Mayor Patriarca stated it is keeping the taxes manageable because we are able to make the monthly or annual debt payments and can level this out to affordable payments. Noted the various things that can cause the budget to go up each year on it's own. Councilman Tompkins questioned as an example if you continue to borrow \$1 million dollars each year for the road project and you keep adding this to the debt when do you stop adding debt. Council President Allen stated that with what is in the budget it does not mean we will actually spend \$1 million dollars, it only allows for us to have the ability to do so if need be. Mayor Patriarca stated that was correct and that Council still decides. Noted that Administration still has to come to Council for authorization to borrow anything and if you choose not to approve \$1 million dollars that is up to Council.

Councilman Tompkins stated that he would be making his colleagues mad saying this but there is not one bond issue that will be presented to this Council that they will not approve. Mayor Patriarca stated that he disagreed with that as they have not approved everything he has presented. Noted that for the most part, Administration works hard to propose a reasonable and affordable bond request. Noted they are looking to do what the residents want and need. Commented that they are paying down the debt and you can see that it is stable. Stated the debt ratio is at 1.8% which is quite low and one of the lowest the town has seen in 40 years. Noted that this includes the \$6 million dollars just spent on the Dams. Stated he does not want to say it is low but it where it has been since he has been Mayor and it has not spiked or taken off at all. Mayor Patriarca advised the many projects we have completed and our debt is still holding stable. Stated he would love to see the debt at zero but is that realistic and feels none of us here will ever see that unless we stop everything and let the town just start deteriorating.

Councilman Tompkins stated he is not suggesting that. Mayor Patriarca stated he knows he is not.

Councilman Tompkins stated he could foresee another \$1 million dollar bond for the Presidential Lakes Fire Department. Mayor Patriarca stated no and that they are looking at prices and getting ready to put this out to bid to see what this is going to cost, but have already gotten prices on a building and it is less than 10% of what Councilman Tompkins is proposing just for the structure. Councilman Tompkins questioned if Country Lakes Fire Department cost over \$1 million dollars to be done. Mayor Patriarca stated it may have but he doubts it and that this is the value of the property and not what they paid for it. Councilman Tompkins stated he is looking at the value of his home in comparison to the projected cost of the Fire Department building. Mayor Patriarca stated that it would be no where near a \$1 million dollar building and are basing their price on a shell price he received for a building. Noted he believes it will be cheaper then what it would cost just for the roof. A discussion ensued on the information already received from the Engineering firm and roofing options.

Councilman Tompkins questioned sheet #15 under General Appropriations. Stated he is looking at the drop in the Police salaries and that it seems we are loosing officers. Asked what will happen if we decrease now and hire more officers will this increase over time. Council President Allen stated that the budget will increase with the salaries. Councilman Tompkins stated we are looking at a budget of x dollars now and when we start hiring officers to fill vacancies it is going to be harder to budget and manage this document.

Councilman Cartier advised that the salary for the vacant officers is already included in this budget and is just less because you are looking at retired officers at the top of their range and

bringing in a rookie officer at the bottom of the range. Mayor Patriarca advised there is money in there that will potentially cover new officers if we can get to that point. Noted the four officers seen in the budget workbook are not at full salary because they know they will not get officers until a certain part of the year so therefore would not budget a full years salary. Noted that the budget will increase substantially because their salaries will reach the top of their range within 5 years.

Council President Allen stated this would also depend on overtime going up or down. Mayor Patriarca noted that overtime would be a factor as everything else does depending on what the officers do as far as K9 or EMT work as well as other issues that unexpectedly arise. Council President Allen stated that what he is saying is even though it may increase it may not increase as much because overtime could be less with more officers. Mayor Patriarca agreed but stated that overtime is not necessarily from manpower but seems to be more officers calling out sick now that they are on a different shift.

Councilman Tompkins stated that under Emergency Management, the salary went up 19% and questioned the reason for this. Mayor Patriarca stated they did look at this position and did not find it difficult to raise this salary amount based on the amount of services provided by this individual. Noted that while we are home sleeping, this individual is worrying about what is happening during a storm event or other emergent matter. Stated this individual is here before everyone and leaves after everyone is gone and is constantly updating the Mayor. Noted he is here a lot for a small compensation and with the importance of what he does they did not feel this was unreasonable. Councilman Tompkins stated this is a place to make possible cuts. Councilwoman Jackson stated it sounds like a lot but when you look at the numbers it really is not much. Councilman Tompkins stated he has never had a 19% pay raise. Mayor Patriarca stated they do not look at it as a pay raise but rather compensation and looking at it as compensation for services rendered. Stated they know what this individual provides and probably deserves more. Stated he knows what the County gets for Emergency Management situations. Councilwoman Jackson asked how much they get. Mayor Patriarca stated they are full time employees getting \$60,000.00 to \$80,000.00 per year but doesn't know that there is anyone there more qualified than what we have right here as he is one of the most qualified Emergency Management Coordinators, he believes throughout Burlington County and possibly the State. Councilwoman Jackson stated at \$6,000.00. Mayor Patriarca stated he is comfortable with it but it is a Council decision.

Councilman Tompkins commented on the Fire Departments that closed and the reasons being membership and cost savings. Noted he is seeing a 46% increase in expenditures for this year and questioned why. Mayor Patriarca stated that cost efficiency is certainly something they consider within the Fire Department at all times. Noted that none of the closures of the volunteer Fire Departments was a cost savings measure and the driving decisions on any of the companies at that time was the lack of response and membership and they could not see the logic behind funding an organization that was not providing a service. Stated the closure of the service came as a result of the companies themselves because they were no longer receiving support from the Township and could not support themselves and since they were not providing the service they chose to close their companies. Commented that the large increase Council is seeing is due to the recent purchase that went through for the air bottles which had to be purchased and is in the budget as a budgeted item.

Council President Allen confirmed that what they budgeted for last year they ended up spending \$500,000.00 to \$600,000.00 less. Mayor Patriarca noted that most of this was from unexpected things such as officers retiring that were not expected to retire. Noted that some also comes from employees that go out on Workman's Compensation leave and the money then stays in the salary line and the majority of their pay gets paid through the insurance and you cannot budget for things like that. Council President Allen asked if this can also be attributed to department heads being more fiscally responsible. Mayor Patriarca stated it certainly has an impact on the budget so it does not exceed the plan. Noted the plan they present is presented by the department heads to Administration and Administration then tweaks it to where they believe it can go. Noted the departments used to have huge wish list but they do better now. Stated they ask for what is needed to operate and they often ask for manpower and they will give it if they can. Commented they will remove things if they are not being used multiple years. Noted that things may not break as much as they have previously so this will be added to surplus for the next year to help with the tax levy so they are not charging as much.

Councilman Tompkins asked Mr. Benick about sheet #26 under Capital Improvements, what the fund for \$50,000.00 was for. Mr. Benick advised it is a dedicated fund for down

payments on bond ordinances. Noted that you are required to put 5% down and noted that this will go into reserve and sit there until it is needed. Mayor Patriarca noted that hypothetically he believes if they wanted to make a Capital purchase in the amount of \$40,000.00 they could use this and pay for it as cash. It was noted that any Capital purchase requires an ordinance. Noted that cop cars do not need an ordinance because they are purchased through State contract and budgeted for.

Councilman Tompkins questioned sheet #40b and the purchase of a 15 foot conveyor track paver as well as the purchase of more trucks with plows. Mayor Patriarca noted that these are not things that they are purchasing but are things that they could come to Council with and request to purchase but that does not mean that they are purchasing.

Council President Allen stated that these things do not equal \$1 million dollars and he does not understand why Councilman Tompkins keeps saying they are going to spend \$1 million dollars. Councilman Tompkins stated that seems to be his yard stick. Council President Allen stated it sounds good to the public when you present it that way but it is not \$1 million dollars. Mayor Patriarca stated that the \$50,000.00 only gives them the ability to borrow up to \$1 million dollars but that their intentions are not to come to Council with a \$1 million dollar request but if something happens they want to be prepared for that.

Council President Allen asked if anyone else had questions.

Councilwoman Trueblood stated her questions have been answered. Noted that under the Police Department she noted the shift differential and the stipend for EMT's. Stated she did not realize this from last year but noticed it now. Mayor Patriarca expressed that these were contractual items that are required to be given. Noted they are working on ways to curtail this a little bit because it is kind of misleading. Noted that when you look at a stipend that might be \$600.00 for an EMT, under the Fair Labor Standards Act we are required to take that stipend and quantify that into an hourly rate. Stated that this hourly rate gets applied to their salary and it is now it is assigned to any hour worked including overtime so what may be in the contract as a \$600 benefit, by the end of the year is actually a \$900.00 benefit. Stated he has a couple of ideas on how to make this fair to the residents.

Councilwoman Jackson stated that there are many residents that come up and question the vacant properties. Stated that on page 4a she sees a huge anticipated revenue and asked what we are going to be doing to start bringing in this revenue. Mayor Patriarca stated that this year we brought in approximately \$512,000.00 and will probably more this year as the price goes up each year on the abandon homes. Commented that it is unfortunate and although they like that number coming into the budget they would rather it be zero and have the houses occupied. Commented that Council and Administration have very little control to fill these houses or curb this problem which is throughout the State because we do not have the authority. Commented that what is authorized by law, and the legislators are trying to provide some tools for, is to put pressure on these home owners to do something with these properties to get them back on the market so families that are looking for homes can buy them and get them back to being functional. Noted that this is where the vacant property fee comes in and is quite common now throughout New Jersey seeing most towns do this. Noted that the fee structure starts at \$500.00 for the first year and goes up to \$3,000.00 or \$5,000.00 and banks are paying it. Noted he does not see in the near future these homes falling off and in some point in the future these homes will eventually go back on the market and that number will hopefully dwindle. Noted that Dave Benedetti manages the program and Council approved the program. Councilman Cartier asked if there is a database with this information and if Council could have a report of the registered vacant homes. Mayor Patriarca stated they have a complete database and will provide a report to Council. Noted that Code Enforcement tries to identify these homes throughout their travels and bring it back to the Township. Councilman Cartier stated that his curiosity is to see which homes were on, fell off and have come back on, or have been on since the beginning. Mayor Patriarca stated that this was a good point and he had never looked at that before. A discussion ensued on the potential finding of this view. Noted he is hoping to come to Council in the future and feels that they should be looking at commercial properties also not just vacant homes. Feels we should provide incentives to vacant commercial property owners to get businesses up and running. Stated that there is no reason why a business owner should not be paying a vacant property registration fee when a homeowner has to as well. Stated the argument has been that this is going to hurt the business but it is not because there is nobody in there. Councilman Tompkins stated he understands what the Mayor is saying but has a feeling that with something like the new ACME, he notices 3 empty store fronts, and if you start charging the owner of that facility they are going to charge the renters the additional fee. Mayor Patriarca noted that this was a valid point and they have been

discussing how to structure this because of situations like that. Noted the potential of a time period to give the business a chance to market the property and get someone in there, but at some point where do you draw the line 1 year, 2 years, 20 years and stated this could be a mechanism. Councilman Tompkins stated he feels that our focus should be more on looking at some of the empty buildings and trying to bring the businesses in and utilize some of the UEZ funds the way they were intended and give these folks a little help to get started and establishing a foot hold within our community. Mayor Patriarca stated that we do use the UEZ funds as they are intended and we are monitored by the State as to how they are being used. Stated we have not violated any of the intended use of the funds. Stated that the concern with the UEZ is that there are no reoccurring funds coming in for that so how do you pick and chose between potential upcoming businesses and current businesses. Stated that there are other pilot programs and incentives based programs that can be offered. Noted that there are less than \$600,000.00.

Councilwoman Jackson questioned what the biggest problem is with getting businesses to come in. Mayor Patriarca stated that as we all know the largest property and the most desirable for a business is the Browns Mills Shopping Center. Stated they have tried to no avail to get this redeveloped and he is not sure why the developer cannot put a project together that will sustain itself. Noted that contractors are looking for larger profit margins. Commented that they are currently looking at other areas that they feel are equally impressive and should be developed. Commented on looking to stretch Juliustown Road. Advised that the Browns Mills Supply was recently purchased and he is waiting to see what happens with that. Noted there are some potential projects and they are looking for homes for these groups to come here but the main location would be Juliustown Road at this point. Noted that they are not abandoning the idea of the Browns Mills Shopping Center but they do not have anything currently for this project.

Councilwoman Trueblood commented on the commercial vacancy fees and used the Browns Mills Shopping Center as an example of several empty store fronts and if they were to charge him a fee it could be motivation for him to sell. Mayor Patriarca stated he is already paying the property taxes and noted that this is something they have been looking into. Commented on figuring out how to structure that ordinance so that you can target only the vacant businesses within that unit. Noted they are hoping that this will incentivize the property owner to put someone in these storefronts at either a reduced rate or at no rate as we know he has done. Noted that what the business owner gets for the property is not our concern and we just want to see properties occupied. Councilman Tompkins reiterated that there are 3 empty store fronts at the new ACME plaza as well as empty store fronts by the Browns Mills Emergency Squad building and Riccardo's Pizzeria. Commented that this is a problem throughout the town. Mayor Patriarca stated he is right and said how do you incentivize the property owner to get people into these buildings. Noted that people come to start up small businesses but when they go shopping around they find that the cost of these properties is so high that they walk away. Commented on a woman who previously wanted to put in a Veterinarian's office and it did not work out because of the cost. Stated you have to find a way to incentivize these property owners whether residential or commercial. Noted that this is not meant to be a revenue generating program it has to do with getting the property owner in the mode to have the property being utilized. Councilwoman Trueblood stated that many of the store fronts, like the ones in the Browns Mills Shopping Center, are not being maintained and potential businesses do not want to go in there and knows of businesses who won't because of this. Council President Allen stated that it is encouraging to see that Administration is thinking outside the box and coming up with creative ideas to fix these issues.

Councilman Tompkins asked about a mechanic retiring under Streets & Roads and asked if he would be replaced. Mayor Patriarca stated the person has already retired and been replaced with another employee.

Councilman Tompkins questioned the drop in price for the last page under Streets & Roads for account #581 when we assume there will be repairs done to the roads throughout the year. Mayor Patriarca stated that the road repairs that are being done are covered under the road program which is already funded. Councilman Tompkins questioned if that was through the Capital Improvement Fund from last year. Mayor Patriarca stated that was correct. Councilman Tompkins questioned if we were thinking we would have to borrow again before the end of the year. Mayor Patriarca stated we would not know until we get later on into the year what our status is and our available funds as to how much we will need in the year going forward so the borrowing element is unknown at this time.

Councilman Tompkins apologized ahead of time as he agrees they need recreation but his viewpoint is that if he has to list his priorities he feels the roads are more important than recreation, the police department or many other things. Noted he looks at this and thinks wow. Commented on the salary of the recreation department going down approximately \$133,000.00 this year. Councilwoman Jackson stated she believes the Recreation Directors salary is cut in half with half being through Recreation and half Senior Center. Councilman Tompkins stated he hoped she is not making \$133,000.00. Mayor Patriarca stated her salary is covered under both departments. Councilman Tompkins noted the change in salary and does not see any big changes in employees. Noted he was looking at the third page of this section. Councilman Cartier noted the amount actually went up to \$277,000.00. Councilman Tompkins apologized for his error. Mayor Patriarca noted that the details are different than the budgeted. Noted the title change for an employee and the loss of a higher paid employee last year and a current employee in that position at a lesser salary.

Councilman Tompkins questioned the \$33,000.00 budgeted for the after school program and if these were the centers including Nesbit and Dominique Johnson. Asked if we ever reached out to the school to try and help them. Mayor Patriarca asked in what respect and noted the school has the Wrap Around program at the schools themselves.

Councilman Tompkins questioned where the \$4,000.00 for the Senior Center TV was located. Mayor Patriarca stated that this was initially supposed to be purchased through last years funding but is now coming out of this years funding from the bottom line amount. Council President Allen noted that the TV is \$3,600.00. Councilman Cartier noted the bottom line had gone down \$3,100.00.

Council President Allen asked if Council had any further questions or comments.

Councilman Cartier asked for a brief recess.

Council President Allen recessed the meeting at approximately 10:18 a.m.

Council President Allen called the meeting back to order at approximately 10:24 a.m.

Council President Allen opened this portion of the meeting for public comments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Norma Water, Browns Mills - 1. Ms. Waters handed out a statement she had prepared and then read the statement to Council and the public. Ms. Waters commented on the funding of the Police Department and her concern that they get what they need. Commented that we need a full compliment of officers and advised the Mayor we must afford these services. Noted our Police Department had the worst record of clearing cases in Burlington County even when only 10% under full hiring. Noted we can no longer afford the mismanagement of Mr. Gonzalez and the lawsuits, resignations and embarrassment he continues to cause. Suggested cutting Mr. Gonzalez by 25% and putting him on probation for at least 6 months for misconduct. Stated that if the Mayor will not agree to that Council should simply remove him from his position. Commented that Council should refuse to waive the residency requirement and fully vet any candidates for Administrator to save the Township a lot of money and restore our Township's reputation and encourage others to live here. Commented on the financial can and continuing to borrow money for things that should have been done long ago. Noted that if Council continues to wait they will render powerless if placed under a State Manager. Spoke on various state programs that the Township relies heavily on that are now at risk. Noted the State has suffered 9 credit downgrades due to flagrant waste and various other items. Commented that the Township is not more credit worthy than the State. Stated we owe it to future residents to cover our responsibilities including cars and road maintenance out of current revenue. Advised to not fall for the same false reassurances with which Administration hoodwinked Council last year. Stated the Mayor and Administrator assured everyone that Council could confidently pass last years proposed budget because Council could refuse any of the borrowing and when the Council did in fact refuse the Mayor had a tantrum. Asked that Council say no to borrowing for roads, cars and any other expenses that should be covered by the current tax rate. Plan for the future and start the long road in getting us into fiscal health.

Deacon Bailey, - 1. Thanked Council and the Mayor for their service. **2.** Commented on the comments regarding the empty businesses and stated that one of the reasons some of the merchants leave is that after they have signed their lease or rented for a year, the rent sometimes doubles and it happened to him and a friend of his as well. **3.** Commented on the

Police Department and noted that from his teaching and the wisdom of other individuals he has heard that this order is the origin of waste. Stated that when he looks at this department and the statements by the Police Chief that he can operate in a way that eliminates this Council, then he has reservations about that. Stated that under this form of government, it is his understanding that all departments come under the authority of the Mayor. Commented that he does not understand how you can get around that and as soon as the Police Department is put in order as it should be, he thinks some of the problems that exist will be eliminated.

Seeing no other residents wishing to be heard Council President Allen closed this portion of the meeting to the Public.

Council came to a consensus to not meeting on Wednesday March 23rd. It was noted that Council could take a vote at the April 6th meeting and the Public Hearing would be held at that time.

Council President Allen thanked the Mayor and CFO for attending the meeting and providing information to Council now as well as before the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 10:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sunshine Dashiell

Sunshine Dashiell
Deputy Township Clerk