

TOWNSHIP OF VERNON

TOWNSHIP COUNCIL WORK SESSION

January 6, 2014

The Work Session of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 6:30 pm on Monday, January 6, 2014, in the Vernon Municipal Center, 21 Church Street, Vernon, New Jersey. The primary purpose of this Work Session was to discuss the 2014 Municipal Operating Budget.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

Adequate notice of this work session was provided to the public and the press on January 5, 2014 and was posted on the Township website January 2, 2014, and on the front door of the Municipal Building in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6. Official action will be taken.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Council President led the assemblage in the salute to the flag.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Present were Council Members Daniel Kadish, Jean Murphy, Patrick Rizzuto, Dick Wetzel, and Council President, Brian Lynch. Also present were: Mayor Vic Marotta, Business Administrator Bill Zuckerman and Elke Yetter, CFO.

OPEN TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council President Lynch asked for a motion to open the meeting for Public Comment.

MOTION: Daniel Kadish

SECOND: Dick Wetzel

All members present were in favor.

Robert Oliver, [REDACTED], spoke regarding the budget and his concerns about the long term impact of police department personnel. Mr. Oliver applauded the Council for the decrease in tax rate.

CLOSED TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

Seeing no one else from the public wishing to speak, Council President Lynch asked for a motion to close the public comment portion of the meeting.

MOTION: Daniel Kadish

SECOND: Jean Murphy

All members present were in favor.

Motion to approve Resolution #14-25:

MOTION: Dick Wetzel

SECOND: Jean Murphy

Council Member Murphy read a prepared statement regarding a possible conflict of interest regarding Resolution 14-12, which had been tabled from the Township Council's Reorganization Meeting on January 1, 2014. Council Member Murphy explained that even though she holds a New Jersey Real Estate Broker's License, the Township Attorney, Kevin Kelly, had advised her that her license would not create a conflict of interest.

The Council discussed attorney fees.

A roll call vote was taken:

AYES: Daniel Kadish, Patrick Rizzuto, Dick Wetzel, Brian Lynch

NAYS: Jean Murphy

Resolution #14-25 was adopted.

RESOLUTION #14-25

AUTHORIZING THE AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FOR TOWNSHIP SPECIAL ATTORNEY

WHEREAS, there is a need for Special Legal Services including Utility Issues, Tax Appeals/Foreclosures and Conflict Issues for the year 2014 for the Township of Vernon; and

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-5 specifically exempts professional services from provisions of public bidding as provided in the Local Public Contracts Law; and

WHEREAS, said specified professional services are to be rendered or performed by a person or persons authorized by law to practice a recognized profession, and whose practice is regulated by law within the meaning of N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et seq., as amended; and

WHEREAS, the performance of said professional services requires knowledge of an advanced field of learning acquired by a prolonged formal course of specialized training and study as distinguished from general academic instruction or apprenticeship and training; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Vernon is desirous to appoint John E. Ursin, Esq. of the law offices of Schenck, Price, Smith & King, LLP, as a non-fair and open contract pursuant to the provisions of the Local Public Contracts Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et seq.; and

WHEREAS, the Chief Finance Officer has determined and certified in writing that the value of the contract is available for these purposes subject to the adoption of the 2014 Municipal Budget; and

WHEREAS, the Local Public Contracts Law N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1 et seq., as amended, requires that this Resolution be publicly advertised.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Township of Vernon that Vernon Township hereby authorizes and approves the award of contract of a Professional Service Contract to John E. Ursin, Esq. from the law offices of Schenck, Price, Smith & King, LLP, pursuant to a non-fair and open contract pursuant to the provisions of the Local Public Contracts Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:20-1 et seq. to provide Legal Services in accordance with the attached Contract for Professional Services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the award of contract shall be contingent upon the completion and receipt of the following:

1. A fully-executed professional services contract detailing the scope of services, established fees for said professional services, mandatory Equal Opportunity Language and Affirmative Action Certificate; and
2. Receipt of all statutorily mandated “pay to play” political contribution forms pursuant to N.J.S.A. 19:44A-20.4 et seq.;
3. New Jersey Business Registration Certificate; and
4. Upon the aforementioned professional being a member in good standing in his respective profession.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Township Clerk are hereby authorized and directed to execute, seal and deliver the attached Contracts for Professional Services on behalf of and in the name of the Township of Vernon and that the Township Clerk shall publish the award of contract as required by law within ten (10) days of passage of this Resolution.

DISCUSSION ON THE 2014 MUNICIPAL OPERATING BUDGET

Mayor Marotta explained that the budget is a plan denoting where the municipality will place it's resources for the year. Vernon Township has a \$22.6 million dollar budget.

BUILDING DEPARTMENT - Tom Pinand, Construction Code Official

Council President Lynch questioned the slight increase in technology and asked if the program used in the Building Department is adequate, to which Mr. Pinand said that it was adequate.

Council Member Murphy discussed the fees and requested a breakdown of permits issued.

POLICE DEPARTMENT - Chief Randy Mills, Lt. Dan Young

Chief Mills reviewed college credits and discussed the increase. Service contracts and technology were also discussed. Ammunition and obtaining it were also discussed. Chief Mills stated he would look at dispatch software and hardware upgrades.

Lieutenant Young explained that by replacing full-time dispatchers with part-time dispatchers it cut down on overtime, and is working out well with scheduling.

Chief Mills spoke regarding replacing officers in the future when retirements come about.

Council Member Murphy questioned who pays for new officers to attend the Police Academy, Mayor Marotta advised that the Township pays \$500.

Chief Mills' long term goals could be to get a task force active again; however, there is not enough personnel at the present time.

Lieutenant Young advised that utilizing "Info Cop" has made a major improvement and is a great tool for the officers.

Council Member Kadish questioned the police cars. Chief Mills stated right now there are 10 police cars and 4 SUV's, and he would like to see 2 SUV's purchased each year to replace old police cars. The Chief discussed some requested capital purchases and will go into greater detail when capital items are discussed.

Council Member Murphy questioned radio coverage in the Township. Radio communication and upgrades in the system were discussed.

Council Member Kadish questioned radio communication with other towns and the use of our gator vehicle. Lieutenant Young has ATV certification and does ATV training. Lieutenant Young added that there is no need for more than one gator at this time.

Mayor Marotta reported the overall budget for the Police Department is a 1.7% increase over the requested budget for salary and wages and operating expenses. The contractual agreement included a 2% raise for our officers. Mayor Marotta further reported on the dispatch page of the budget costs: inside the cap there is a 1.6% decrease, and outside the cap a 1.3% decrease. The Mayor said he is very proud of all the department heads and the job they do, but the police department is the largest expenditure. For the 3rd year in a row, you will be increasing our services to the community, and doing it without a significant increase in cost - which is a compliment to the leadership as well as the people that make up the police department. Adding new police officers will be done in a way that does not break the budget.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL BUDGET

Council President Lynch stated there is a change in the budget: an increase in the Mayor's salary and Council President's salary. Mayor Marotta explained that last year's Council President Patrick Rizzuto, chose not to accept it, so there was not an increase in the salary. Council President Lynch felt that the Council President should get the same salary as the Council Members. Mayor Marotta said he would make the change in the budget to \$3,000. Council President Lynch advised that there is a \$70,000. salary for the Mayor. Council Member Wetzel stated that he is in favor of this, as he has seen the work that the Mayor has done and all the thankless hours he has put in for all the meetings, functions and conferences he has attended. He added that the Mayor is well recognized in the public and well appreciated, and he proposed that this be accepted.

Council Member Rizzuto stated that considering the level of oversight that the Mayor has in terms of being the Chief Executive Officer in this community, that the request is certainly not outlandish, and it might be considered to be underappreciated.

Mayor Marotta handed out to the Council a comparison of Municipal Manager/Business Administrator salaries from various towns in New Jersey, noting that the numbers were considerably higher than his requested salary. Council Member Murphy questioned if this is a time to vote on the salary and said at the time of the salary range increase request, it was \$50,000.00 now it is \$70,000.00 and questioned whether the judge's decision allowed for an increase at this time. Council Member Kadish thought there was a moratorium on a salary increase by the judge. Council Member Murphy said going from \$30,000.00 to \$70,000.00 was outrageous. Mayor Marotta responded that she is entitled to her opinion, but feels that he is grossly underpaid.

At this time, a resident asked for a point of order and the Council President denied the request.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT - Elke Yetter, CFO

The Council President spoke regarding shared services, noting we receive \$13,000.00 - \$14,000.00 from Sussex Borough for CFO services. Mrs. Yetter stated there are four people in the Finance Department including one part timer.

Council Member Wetzel questioned if there were any other shared services. There was a discussion regarding shared services with Montague Township's building department, and it was determined that there was an issue regarding fees, and the deal fell through.

Mayor Marotta stated that Civil Service is a union on top of a union, and said it impacts our budget because of the requirements that need to be followed. Council Member Rizzuto advised not all Civil Service in municipalities are the same.

Council Member Rizzuto noted, again, that we are doing more with less.

The Council President asked the Council Members if they would like to schedule another work session on Thursday, January 9, 2014 at 6:30 pm to review the budgets of the Department of Public Works, Tax Collector, Tax Assessor, Land Use and General Administration. The Council was all in favor of this date and time.

Mayor Marotta said another work session would have to be scheduled for Boards and Commissions, volunteer services, Clerk, Court, Animal Control and Community Affairs.

A Council Member asked the Council President how many resumes were received so far for the Clerk's position. Mr. Lynch advised four had come in so far, and reminded the Council that an Executive Session would be held during the Council Meeting of the January 13th.

ADJOURNMENT

Council Member Patrick Rizzuto moved to adjourn this Work Session of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon. Council Member Dick Wetzel made the second; all were in agreement. The work session was adjourned at 8:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Bates
Deputy Municipal Clerk

Brian Lynch,
Council President

Minutes approved: January 27, 2014