

TOWNSHIP OF VERNON

TOWNSHIP COUNCIL BUDGET WORK SESSION MEETING

November 6, 2008

The Budget Work Session Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 4:25 p.m. on Thursday, November 6, 2008 in the Vernon Municipal Center, 21 Church Street, Vernon, New Jersey with Mayor Austin Carew presiding.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The Township Clerk advised that adequate notice of this meeting was provided to the public and the press on October 31, 2008 by delivering to the press and posting at the Municipal Building a copy of the meeting notice as required by the Open Public Meetings Act.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Mayor led the assemblage in the salute to the flag.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

The roll call of members was called. Present were Gary Grey, Valerie Seufert, and Austin Carew. Also present were Township Manager Melinda Carlton and Fiscal Analyst Kerrie Scott.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS

Mayor Austin Carew stated this budget work session meeting is scheduled to discuss municipal department performance measures. He thanked all municipal department heads for attending this evening's meeting.

Mayor Carew opened the meeting for Public Comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Seeing and hearing no one from the public wishing to speak, Mayor Carew closed the Public Comment portion of the meeting.

BUDGET WORK SESSION

MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Township Manager, Melinda Carlton, gave a brief overview of the practice and purpose of performance measures and how as a tool helps managers to understand staffing needs. Ms. Carlton reported each municipal department will be tracking their performance measures monthly for the remainder of 2008 and then will track them quarterly in 2009. Municipal departments are encouraged to revise their performance measures to better track tasks performed. Eventually, department surveys will be prepared and completed by the public to evaluated point of service performance. Ms. Carlton indicated Sussex County is currently undertaken performance measures for its departments and divisions.

Township Manager. Number of meetings, time devoted in attending meetings was noted as was number of phone calls and email communications received and generated.

Mayor and Council. Goals listed in 2008 will continue in 2009.

Police Department. Chief Wherry briefly discussed some of the 2009 goals for the Police Department. The Police Department would like to develop more programs for the senior citizens such as ID theft and awareness programs concerning commerce

scams. The Police Department would also like to further develop its use of the computer aided dispatch system.

Fire Department. The Township Manager will be working with the Fire Department to develop a mission statement and performance measures. The Township Council requested number of fire calls responded to and reporting of vehicles in service versus vehicles out of service to be incorporated into the Fire Department's performance measures.

Department of Fire Prevention. Fire Inspector Tom Van Gorder briefed the Township Council on the responsibilities of the Fire Prevention department. Quarterly fire safety reports are filed with the DCA. 2009 goals will include promoting more fire safety awareness programs to Township organizations.

Emergency Services. The Township Manager will be working with the Emergency Service volunteers to develop a mission statement and performance measures. The Township Council stated they were interested in tracking the number of volunteer hours devoted and volunteer retention and training. It was noted that volunteers are needed for Emergency Services.

Department of Public Works. Dave Pullis, Director of Public Works, presented the performance measures being tracked. The Township Council noted the high number of phone calls tracked daily. The Council is interested in tracking items concerning the utilization of resources on a seasonal basis and number of vehicles in service versus out of service. The Township Manager complimented Mr. Pullis on the level of detail tracked.

Finance Department. In 2009, The Township's Payroll Clerk will be moved into the Finance Department. The Township Council requested the CFO have more contact and availability to answer questions, especially in light of an anticipated tight budget year ahead. The Council also requested personnel hours be tracked concerning OPRA requests and responses.

Office of the Tax Collector. Acting Tax Collector Anne Izzo reported 2009 goals include public education and awareness regarding various tax programs available to seniors and veterans. Performance measures will be revised to include tracking of staff hours devoted to OPRA requests.

Office of the Tax Assessor. The Township's Tax Assessor, Lynne Schweighardt, discussed the revaluation program which is underway. The revaluation will be complete and affect 2009 property values and taxation. Ms. Schweighardt stated her department works with many other municipal departments in providing current property owners and addresses. The Township Council asked that a letter be sent to Township property owners explaining how and why a municipal property revaluation is performed.

Department of Personnel. Director of Personnel, Pennie Roland, stated she is currently researching Employee Assistance Program "EPA" programs and related costs. Ms. Roland defended the existence of the Department of Personnel and reported how the Department of Personnel assists all municipal departments, is currently engaged in drafting a Code of Ethics, updating the Personnel Policies and Procedures Handbook, and audits the accuracy of insurance coverage provided to active personnel.

The healthcare benefit package will also be examined and revised in the next year. The Township Council asked the Personnel Department to track insurance billing as a performance measure, quantifying money saved as a result of uncovering billing errors. The Council also stated they encourage personnel training and professional development. It was noted that the payroll function is a finance function and the payroll clerk will be moved to the Finance Department's budget.

Office of the Municipal Clerk and Registrar. Robin Kline, Municipal Clerk and Local Registrar for Vital Statistics, presented her department's performance measures.

Records management tasks, timely preparation of minutes, accurate processing of various permit applications and OPRA request forms will be monitored for performance measures. Additionally, updating the Township's Codebook will be a priority for 2009, effectively codifying Township Ordinances adopted since December 2005. Ms. Kline also reported on performance measures to be tracked for the Registrar and Vital Statistics responsibilities.

Department of Planning and Development. Director of Planning and Development, Louis Kneip, reported that updating the Township's Tax Maps and having them certified is a long-term goal. In the short-term, Mr. Kneip indicated his department will be moving to more fully utilize the Township's Website and reconcile all escrow accounts. The Township Council requested that Planning Board and Zoning Board applications be available to download on the Website as soon as possible. Tom Pinand reported on the Building Department's goals and performance measures. He noted that the Building Department has a heavy number of phone calls and walk-ins, which are tracked by number as well as in 3-minute intervals of time.

Municipal Court. Donna Zuidema, Court Administrator, reported her department receives judiciary OPRA requests, which she will begin to track. Ms. Zuidema reported that her office interacts with many other municipal departments and assists the police, fire, fire prevention, animal control, and code enforcement departments in the enforcement of fines and penalties due to the municipality.

Department of Recreation and Leisure. Recreational Director Patricia Seger reported on how her job as Recreation Director has evolved over the years and spoke about how the PAL program, School District, and Township programs interact, saving the Township money in terms of personnel and shared services. She complimented the Township DPW for their valuable assistance in grooming ball fields and moving sets of bleachers from park to park as needed. The Township Council questioned the accuracy of the reported acreage of Township-owned recreational facilities versus the total acreage of open space, including state park lands. The Township Council also asked for more detail as to the costs associated with maintaining the ball fields.

Animal Control. Animal Control Officer Tom Maellaro stated his department is required by the state to track the number dogs licensed, vaccinated, euthanized, and adopted. He stressed that animals are euthanized only if they are very sick or injured and has never euthanized an animal because of lack of space at the shelter. He reported on the successful Rabies Clinic held November 1st. The Dog Census required by the state will be completed before the end of the year. He also reported that it takes an average of 3.5 hours every day to clean, feed, and maintain the animals at the shelter with much of this work being performed by volunteers.

Sewer Utility. The Township Manager indicated the budget has not been finalized for the Sewer Utility. The Township Council asked the Manager to investigate the possibility of engaging in a shared service with Hardyston Township, which already maintains a sewer system.

Environmental Commission. The Township Manager reported she will be contacting the Chairman to request their mission statement and that she will be finalizing their budget before next week.

Economic Development Commission. The Township Manager has prepared a preliminary budget for the EDC and will finalize it before next week's Budget Work Session meeting.

The Township Manager introduced the revenue side of the proposed 2009 budget and asked the Township Council to review and advise her of their questions before the November 13 Budget Work Session meeting.

Lastly, the Township Manager briefed the Township Council on the proposed 2009 Capital Improvement Project "CIP" Budget, which will include account numbers for each capital project. Ms. Carlton again asked the Council to review the CIP budget

and to think about what projects they would want to prioritize in 2009, keeping in mind it will be a tight budget year.

Mayor Austin Carew mentioned he would like to create a Finance Committee in 2009 comprised of two Council members and members of the public. The Finance Committee would review and monitor all budgetary concerns and make recommendations to the Township Council as a whole for consideration.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Carew stated the Executive Session was taken off the agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business to be conducted on the Regular Meeting agenda, a motion for Adjournment was made by Gary Grey, seconded by Valerie Seufert, with all members voting in favor.

The Budget Work Session of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin R. Kline

Robin R, Kline, MAS, RMC
Municipal Clerk

Minutes approved: December 1, 2008