

TOWNSHIP OF VERNON

TOWNSHIP COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING/WORKSESSION

March 24, 2011

The Special Meeting/Work Session of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was convened at 7:05 p.m. on Thursday, March 24, 2011 in the Vernon Municipal Center, 21 Church Street, Vernon, New Jersey with Mayor Sally Rinker presiding.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

Adequate notice of this meeting had been provided to the public and the press on January 10, 2011, and was posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Present were Council Members Richard Carson, Brian Lynch, Harry Shortway, and Mayor Sally Rinker. Council Member Valerie Seufert was in attendance by speakerphone. Also present was Township Manager Jerry Giaimis.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mayor Rinker opened the meeting for Public Comment.

Gary Martinsen, Vernon, expressed his opinion that any bond ordinances should not be moved forward until after the election and the change in government. He read a prepared statement about that issue.

Tom McClachrie, Vernon Taxpayer's Assoc., spoke about the lake communities' reimbursement report that was due at the last meeting.

Mr. Giaimis advised that the professionals were unable to attend this work session, but that he expected a rough draft of the report in his office by the next day.

Council Member Carson noted that he had been very clear in his direction that everything was to be ready for Monday's meeting regardless of the professionals' schedule. He further noted that all that had been delivered had been an overview; therefore, he stated that he wanted them at Monday's meeting and he wanted the full report by 2:00pm on Friday the 25th in Council mailboxes.

Council Member Lynch agreed that the report was overdue.

Tom McClachrie spoke about the difference between "needs" vs. "wants" and that existing obligations need to be budgeted before adding any new expenditures.

Robert Oliver, [REDACTED] agreed with Mr. McClachrie about special interests. He also spoke about Canistear Road – he does not feel the project should be broken down into three (3) portions.

Chris Jensen, Fire Department, addressed the equipment being requested. He noted that the requests have nothing to do with any elections, but rather are needs that have existed for a number of years. He advised that this was a public safety issue only. He noted that 5-year plans had been prepared in previous years, but those plans were put off year after year.

Council Member Lynch advised that TriData Corp. had done the Fire Safety survey based on a 10-year plan for operational and equipment needs.

Greg Carter, Vernon Fire Chief, spoke about the fact that most of the Council are aware of the needs of the Fire Department. He was confident that they are aware of what is required to run the Fire Department as a business.

Phyllis McPeak, asked for respect and consideration to the former employees laid off before spending more money.

Seeing no one else from the public wishing to speak, Mayor Sally Rinker closed the public portion of the meeting.

Mayor Rinker advised the public that the purpose of this meeting was to discuss all the issues of the money to be spent with input from the town. She asked if there were any other items in the budget to be discussed.

Council Member Lynch felt that the way to go would be to see what equipment was being asked to be replaced or upgraded. He recommended a sub-committee be formed to review the equipment. Council Members Carson and Shortway advised that they were available. Dave Pullis, DPW Supt., agreed to meet with Council Member Carson on Monday afternoon to view the DPW equipment.

Mayor Rinker asked for detailed reports from all departments,

Mr. Giaimis asked everyone to send him these lists by Friday so he could distribute them to Council.

Council Member Carson asked the Fire Chief about a recent search and rescue call – if there was any equipment that would have made their efforts more effective. The Fire Chief noted that a GPS or laptop computer would have been helpful in locating the victim (they were told the victim was in a certain location, but was actually somewhere else). He pointed out that West Milford's equipment was of better quality.

Mayor Rinker asked if anyone had any general budget questions.

Manager's Report

Mr. Giaimis advised that he had started working on the Capital Improvement Program right from the start of his employment in Vernon, noting some planned projects had not been moved forward. He further advised that he had reached out to department heads in mid-January to look at the numbers in their areas.

- Administrative Office of the Courts had done an audit of the court system and noted updates that were required in the area of security (@\$13,000.00).
- Road Improvements planned on Canistear Road were noted.
- Fire Prevention – A Knox box system for commercial buildings would allow the fire department to have access in emergencies during off hours.
- Personnel expenses being considered – file cabinets for the Courts, punch cards, time cards, and finger printing were noted.
- Technology items noted – IT back-up program for emails, and a fire suppression system.
- Phone system upgrade in an effort to reduce phone bills.
- Document scanner/digital storage.

Mayor Rinker asked what was included for the Canistear Road project.

Mr. Giaimis responded that there is a grant for \$450,000 but the amount needs to be budgeted and then will be reimbursed. It will be budgeted over a 3-year period.

Community Affairs

Pat Seger reported on her requests in the bond ordinance - \$68,000 in requests, which are part of a 5- or 10-year plan.

- o Bathrooms at the Veteran's Park – failed inspection as there is no hot water and they need new fixtures for a total of \$6,000. Dave Pullis noted that new doors were needed as well.
- o Safety lights, heat, and electric for the sheds.
- o Trails and fields maintenance.
- o Stairs at Maple Grange – for child safety.

- Bleachers – only 4 left that need to be replaced (they are wooden and are not fenced in the back to prevent falls).
- Playground equipment – ADA requirements – they allow 1 year to meet the new requirements. Instead of retrofitting, to erect small parks with new ADA-approved equipment.

Council Member Seufert asked about any grants for these items. Ms. Seger advised that she is applying for some grants.

Police Department

The following requested items were listed by Chief Wherry:

- Radio repeater – coverage in a large portion of the town. It takes about 6 weeks to replace them.
- Data back-up system for computers – all computers are currently on one system with no back-up.
- Radio tower building on Lake Conway – they have had to keep repairing the buildings, but would like to move the equipment to a more stable building.
- In-car video system – a safety feature that will help the officers defend against civil suits.
- Mobile data terminals in the cars – will increase efficiency.
- 4x4 vehicle – would replace 2 cars – and some new equipment (will salvage some equipment from the retired cars). Current vehicle mileage on the 4 existing 4x4 vehicles are: 71,000; 107,000; 90,000; and 59,000. Would prefer a total of 6 vehicles with 4x4. He noted that the current canine unit is a 4x4 and that it is also used as the detective vehicle.

Mayor Rinker asked about the years of the current vehicles.

The Chief promised get that information to her. He continued his list of requests:

- Video system upgrades – cameras and security for the Municipal building for court or meetings, as well as outside the building. Dispatch would monitor the system. He noted that there was a new law requiring Departments to videotape all interviews of suspects – they have 2 rooms set up and need to include a 3rd.
- Building access system – the current system is pretty old and hard to repair, not to mention costly to repair. It is also hard to integrate with other systems.

Mr. Giannis noted that of the \$293,500 for the Police Department, \$100,000 was found in old bond ordinances that was unused (for equipment). That reduces the amount to @\$173,000 of proposed bonding.

Council Member Lynch inquired about the antennae – he understood it was a high frequency and that the Fire Department paid for part of that to upgrade the frequency. He asked if the antennae upgrade could also work with the Fire Department radios. The Chief advised he would check with the vendor to find out.

Council Member Shortway asked for clarification – that no cars currently have an in-car video system. The Chief advised that Mr. Shortway was correct. He spoke about what should be in all vehicles for the new laws, and for protection against civil suit issues.

Mayor Rinker asked if anyone from the public wished to speak at this time.

Pat Rizzuto – suggested that cameras should not be included for the purpose of the police monitoring meetings.

Chief Wherry was concerned about unruly audiences at meetings.

Gary Martinsen – asked if the time clock and building access system could be integrated? He offered to give the Chief information on back-up and archiving systems. As for the upgrade in radio systems, he also suggested how the Chief could do that.

Tom McClachrie – suggested that current computers could do the work of a time clock. He suggested paving Canistear Road in its entirety now, with just a “small” add-in of \$200,000.

Mr. Giaimis lauded the DPW for their hard work during the storm.

DPW

Mr. Pullis detailed his requests:

- The current fleet of trucks includes vehicles that are dead-lined or almost dead-lined, with some (4) having broken frames. He is asking for dump trucks with plows and sanders. The budget lists 5, but he needs 6. 7 vehicles are needed for the plow routes.
- Mr. Pullis noted that he has a 10-year truck that has been repaired numerous times.
- Another current vehicle (that was bought used) is 20 years old.
- Hotbox for asphalt – for cold weather use.
- A roll-off truck for the recycling center – he found a used one.

Council Members Lynch and Carson promised to stop by the DPW on Monday, 3/28, to look at the DPW equipment.

Council Member Lynch asked if the roll-off truck would be able to be used for plowing as well. He asked about the condition of the plows themselves – if they could be re-used on the new trucks. Mr. Pullis advised that he would look into the possibility of using the roll-off for plowing. He felt that some of the plows could be re-used.

Mayor Rinker asked if the roll-off truck would complete what was required. Mr. Pullis advised that it would. He also explained where the Township could save money in the long run with the roll-off truck – in both labor and time, as well as more revenue from the sale of the recycled items.

Mr. Pullis also noted:

- Sweeper info was discussed – the viability of borrowing one or paying someone for the service. It costs @\$60,000 for sweeping the whole town, with @\$10,000 for drainage issues, etc. The savings of having our own sweeper were explained over contracting the service out.

Gary Martinsen – noted that the people loved the recycling center.

Bernie Nagel – felt the Council should be pro-active instead of re-active.

Mayor Rinker closed the meeting to public comment at this time. She advised that she would go view the DPW equipment at 9:00am on Saturday.

Emergency Services

McAfee Fire Dept. Chief Mike Casmero spoke about their requests:

- Council Member Carson asked the Chief to advise about the jaws of life. The Chief noted that it is 31 years old and is worn out (it weighs @60 lbs.). The newer ones are made to handle the newer vehicles and weighs only @42 lbs.
- Turn-out gear for the Chief's vehicle – he noted that this item was removed from the list and that they were working with the Fire Prevention Bureau on this.
- Other turn-out gear – 5 sets were removed from the listing – they are looking for other sources to pay for them. He noted that OSHA has been fining departments for gear older than 5 years – 20 sets are needed to be replaced as they fall into this category.
- Radios – for vehicles, and portable units. He noted that Mutual Aid is on a high band but most of our trucks do not have that capability (2 trucks have it now, but the other 8 do not).
- Air Paks - @\$8,000 each. Currently there are 2 inside and 1 on the side of the trucks. They should have one for each man (8).
- Air Bags – the current ones are older than 10 years. They are concerned about dry rot or failure during a car lift, which could injure victims and/or firefighters.

The Chief was asked about recent OSHA violations with other Fire Departments and he promised to get that information for the Council.

The public was given the opportunity to speak at this point.

Bernie Nagel – noted his opinion that the plan should be to replace a few items every year to keep ahead of the issues.

The Chief advised that the \$45,000 was not just for a jaws-of-life alone, but also for a spreader, a pump (plus hoses), a cutter, etc. at \$15,000+ for each jaws.

The Pochuck Fire Dept. Chief spoke about their needs:

- A back-up generator – upgrade and larger from the current pull-chain model that only works the bay doors. The new ones run on natural gas.

Council Member Lynch suggested that Mr. Giaimis should check with the State to purchase one from Army/Navy (Bridgewater) which Highland Lakes got a few years back that runs on diesel (part of the Office of Emergency Management).

- Sussex rural will get some specs to assist with looking into another source.

- A pickup truck for equipment and smaller jobs, as well as for easier access at fire scenes.

Council Member Lynch asked where the truck would be housed.

- The Chief noted there were many options he could look into.

Bernie Nagel – suggested rescue usage for the pickup truck, as well.

- Navigation and computers – similar to Police Dept. MDT's – for fire scene locations, where the closest draught sites are, etc. (including structure information) that are all critical to reducing response time and speed in knocking down a fire.

The Vernon Fire Dept. Chief explained his needs and handed out information from the manufacturers on the pumper and rescue truck (@\$900,000), noting the current tanker accommodated 3 guys and held 1,000 gallons:

- ♦ Could save money by bidding both trucks together.
- ♦ Some items requested on the truck specs are statutory, where others were for improved safety of the firefighters.

Mayor Rinker asked about replacement trucks (@\$600,000).

The Chief noted that McAfee did the same about 3 years ago, and this is similar, for @\$400,000; but there have been increases in costs as well as emissions expenses/requirements.

Council Member Lynch asked the Department not to purchase new equipment until they have utilized all current equipment.

The Chief advised that while that was already planned, the rescue truck would probably need new equipment as it is more specialized.

FEMA grants were discussed, though probably a long shot but worth trying. Council Member Lynch gave his insight on his previous experience in this area.

Mayor Rinker suggested trying for a rescue truck for the grant.

The Chief noted that equipment would be more likely to be approved for the grant, than a vehicle.

The Mayor asked about demo models or used vehicles.

The Chief advised that he would consider the idea, but is concerned with the life of a used vehicle (they need to last 20 years).

Council Member Lynch suggested that there are trucks that could be looked at that are brand new, but the towns that ordered them couldn't afford them.

- ♦ Rescue Equipment – the various items being requested were discussed as noted by OSHA for specific tasks, specifically a confined space rescue.

Council Member Lynch suggested having the people coming into the town and putting in confined space structures should be contributing to the cost of equipment needed to protect these structures.

The Chief noted that the issue had been raised, but they were told that approvals had already been granted for their work so assistance would not be considered.

A discussion followed on equipment, training, and different rescue disciplines.

Terri VanderHey, President of the Fire Association, asked about better distribution of equipment between the 4 departments, including the issue of being stranded on the other side of the tracks if the train gets stuck.

The structure of the Fire Department operations was discussed, including the Fire Association which is made up of members of all 4 departments.

The viability of that was explained with the knowledge that the physical locations of each Department require different situational disciplines:

- McAfee is centrally located
- Highland Lakes needs water rescue efforts
- Pochuck is so far away that they need their own jaws rather than waiting for McAfee or Vernon to arrive.

Gary Martinsen – noted that everyone should consider other issues that the residents are dealing with, and suggested a town-wide fundraiser to collect the funds needed.

Tom McClachrie – talked about the purchasing agent working on getting uniform equipment for all the bids. He noted the State Comptroller's Report on fire equipment purchasing problems.

Mr. Giaimis assured the public that multiple bids/manufacturers would be utilized. He noted that he was familiar with all aspects of the Comptroller's Report.

Jim Sheridan – suggested that Council go out to each Department and view the equipment they have as suggested by Council Member Lynch.

The Highland Lakes Fire Dept. Chief noted their requests:

- Rehabbing the tanker was the most important request – the engine was already replaced 2 years ago. It is now 16 years old. He noted that he was not asking for a new truck. He explained the usage of the tanker and its capabilities. He wants to maintain the truck as re-furbished, and it will give many more years of service (@ 15 years on the pump).

Mayor Rinker asked for comparison with Pochuck's recent pumper, and where the dollar amount came from.

The Chief responded that it was 3,500 gallons, \$348,000, and holds 2 people. He advised that the dollar amount was a rough estimate by the manufacturer without actually taking a detailed review.

- The Chief noted that the pumper has a seam leak high up on the tank which can be repaired.

A resident noted that the isolation of the Highland Lakes Fire Department in an ice storm presents a problem when no other Department can get up there to assist.

- Turnout gear, SCBA equipment, and Toughbook computers were also being requested.

Mr. Giaimis noted that the Animal Control was asking for building repairs.

Rescue Squad expenses were also looked at.

Mayor Rinker thanked everyone for their time and input at this work session.

Mr. Giaimis reminded everyone that there was a Council meeting on Monday, March 28, which would include the budget introduction, and the Public Hearing/2nd Reading of the bond ordinances. He noted that the Public Hearing on the Budget would be held at the April Council meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The Special Meeting/Work Session of the Township Council of the Township of Vernon was adjourned at 10:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan S. Nelson
Municipal Clerk

Minutes approved: May 23, 2011