

The Special Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Franklin, County of Somerset, New Jersey, was called to order by the Mayor at 7:10 p.m.

Mayor Levine read the following statement: “In accordance with Section 5 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, Public Law 1975, be advised that adequate notice of this Special Meeting of the Township Council of the Township of Franklin, County of Somerset was made by the posting on the bulletin board at the Municipal Complex and transmitted to the officially designated newspapers, indicating that this Special Meeting would take place at the Franklin Township Middle School Auditorium at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 4, 2008. In addition, a copy of this notice is and has been available to the public and is on file in the Office of the Municipal Clerk.”

Everyone present participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Township Clerk called the roll.

Present: Ms. Eberle, Ms. Francois (arrived at 7:15 p.m.), Mr. Glicklich, Mr. Levine, Mr. Mettler, Deputy Mayor Vassanella

Absent: Ms. Danile, Mr. Prasad, Mr. Sumter

Also present: Leslie G. London, Township Attorney, Kenneth W. Daly, Township Manager (arrived at 7:34 p.m.), Ann Marie McCarthy, Township Clerk

#### **PUBLIC DISCUSSION**

Motion was made by Deputy Mayor Vassanella and seconded by Mr. Mettler to open the meeting for public discussion. Said motion carried unanimously upon voice vote.

Michael Rothberg, Liaison to the Kendall Park First Aid Squad, stated the squad’s need for additional funding. He further stated that South Brunswick is carrying the most amount of funding to the squad despite the fact that 60% of the squad’s calls serve Franklin Township.

Phillip Kramer, 429 Canal Road, representing Taxpayers United in Franklin, stated that seven months ago he and a dozen other people convinced the Board of Education to begin there outside operational review. There would be an open forum for public input on the following Monday. He stated that he had asked for the same type of review at the Council Budget Hearing that took place two days previous and pointed out that such a review could save the Township millions. He questioned if money had been put into the budget for such a review.

Mayor Levine stated that money for the review is not currently in the budget but could be put in before the budget was adopted. Mr. Kramer stated that the company that did the review for the Board of Education is currently in town and recommended looking into them. Deputy Mayor Vassanella stated his interest in an outside review but recommended reviewing all the municipal departments with the exception of the Police Department.

Skip Schaeffer, 2 Laird Terrace, requested an update on the status of a town hall forum. Mayor Levine stated that schedules were being worked out. Mr. Schaeffer also questioned why work seems to have slowed on the Amwell Road reconstruction between DeMott Lane and Cedar Grove Lane. Deputy Mayor Vassanella stated that work had been halted due to archeological findings near O’Connor’s Restaurant. Work would continue, pending the findings of a review committee. A similar situation took place a few years ago on Mettler’s Road near Piscataway. The County Engineer, Mike Amorosa, could be contacted for further information. Mr. Schaeffer asked for clarification of the parking lot loop in the Municipal Complex and expressed a need for clearer signage and stricter enforcement of the new traffic pattern. Deputy Mayor Vassanella clarified that only one portion of the traffic loop was one way and that the area immediately in front of the Public Library still allowed two-way traffic.

Frank Low-beer, President of the Kendall Park First Aid Squad and resident of South Brunswick, expressed his concerns with the amount of calls originating from Franklin Township. He stated that he believes the population has tripled in the area. He further stated that South Brunswick has been giving an additional \$5,000 each year and they pay for all of the squad's gas. He went on to express his gratitude for the new radios that Franklin Township had provided. He stated that the squad needs money to build a new building and acquire new vehicles. The squad needs more funding.

There being no further comments from the public, a motion was made by Deputy Mayor Vassanella to close the meeting for public discussion. Said motion was seconded by Mr. Glicklich and carried unanimously upon voice vote.

Deputy Mayor Vassanella expressed his interest in seeing the statistics regarding the first aid squads in Franklin Township. He stated that he would like to see a comparison between the Kendall Park First Aid Squad and the other first aid squads in the Township. The comparison would include the amount of funding provided to each squad by the Township. If the Kendall Park First Aid Squad is under-funded then an adjustment needs to be made. He expressed an interest in seeing the statistics of the first aid squads for the past two years. Ms. Francois suggested an analysis for the past four years to gain a clearer picture. Deputy Mayor Vassanella agreed but stated that he did not want to waste time in research.

Ms. Francois expressed her interest in an operational review of the Township and pointed out that last year there was money set aside to review the Community Development Department. That review did not take place, as all the bids for that project were over budget. \$25,000 was set aside for the department review. Ms. Francois stated that more money would clearly need to be set aside if it was their intention to carry out plans to review all the municipal departments. She recommended an amount between \$100,000 and \$500,000. Deputy Mayor Vassanella stated that the school system spent approximately \$300,000 on their operational review and suggested that the Township keep their review closer to a quarter or a third of that number. Deputy Mayor Vassanella pointed out that the Township's budget is not as large as the School Board's budget. It was agreed that the matter of an operational review for the Township would have to be brought before the Administrative Subcommittee.

Mr. Mettler stated that an analysis of first aid squads in Franklin Township could be something to look into but warned against treating all the first aid squads the same. He stated that the squads have changed as the situations they deal with have changed and that the Council needed to spend some time examining each first aid squad. He pointed out that quality of service was something that had to be considered. Mr. Mettler stated that he has heard good things regarding the Kendall Park First Aid Squad and the quality of their service. Ms. Eberle pointed out that she had to use the Kendall Park First Aid Squad and had no complaints. She stated that the quality of their service is excellent.

## **BUDGET PRESENTATIONS**

### **Township Clerk/Elections/Council**

Ann Marie McCarthy, Township Clerk presented the budget for the Township Clerk's Office.

Ms. McCarthy reviewed the following:

#### **Council**

- Overall budget was decreased by 37% - from \$21,432 to \$13,489, a \$7,943 decrease.
- Adjustments were made to line items that were not fully expended in Fiscal Year 2008.

#### **Clerk**

- Overall budget was decreased by 18% - from \$50,215 to \$41,132, a \$9,083 decrease.
- Adjustments were made to line items that were not fully expended in Fiscal Year 2008.
- No line items were increased. All line items either stayed the same or were decreased.

Mr. Glicklich questioned the Clerk on her plans to restructure the staff in the Municipal Clerk's Office. Ms. McCarthy explained that she intends on making the staff more consumer friendly and efficient. She stated that each of her staff does a little bit of everything and she intended to consolidate the staff to have one member do all the licensing, one member handle records management and one member, the Deputy Township Clerk, handle all the Council related materials such as the agenda. All members of the Municipal Clerk's Office are cross-trained and all work at the counter.

Ms. McCarthy explained that her main goal for the coming year is to set up records management to work with all the other departments. She mentioned that the County sent a records management team, under the PARIS Grant, to clean up and organize all the inactive files in August. Now one staff member will be required to really maintain that organization by properly disposing of files that are scheduled for destruction by their records retention dates.

Mr. Glicklich questioned if there was a way to set up mailboxes in the Clerk's Office so that Council members could retrieve their mail during the week instead of waiting until Friday evening to receive their mail in their respective mailboxes. Deputy Mayor Vassanella suggested setting up a slot system in the new Council Office so that the Council members do not continuously disturb the Clerk's Office when they come to retrieve their mail. It was agreed that the Council Office would have be locked when not in use and each of the Council members would require a key to the office.

Ms. Francois questioned how much money would be saved in implementing a paperless Council Agenda. The proposal for starting the program suggests a cost of approximately \$40,000. Ms. Vieiro stated that the cost of implementation was correct but was unaware of how much the program would save. She stated that it would likely save the most amount of money in terms of the cost of paper and man-hours. The agenda packet in August took nearly five and half hours to copy and a case and a half of paper. Over time the program should save money but savings may not be evident at the beginning. Ms. Vieiro pointed out that a paperless packet would be more environmentally friendly.

Deputy Mayor Vassanella questioned if the packet would be completely electronic with one shared hard copy. Ms. Francois questioned how the program would work. Ms. McCarthy stated that one hard copy would be available but the details of the program would depend on the software that was utilized. Ms. McCarthy and Ms. Vieiro both gave examples of how a paperless packet could be implemented and clarified that further details would have to be discussed.

Mayor Levine stated that the program would be more efficient and save in staff time and productivity. He further stated that a savings on the program would probably take a while citing that paper is not that expensive. Mr. Glicklich stated that the savings on staff time would be noticeable and that he would like to look into this program further. Mayor Levine pointed out that this matter would have to be brought before the Council again when going out to bid for the computers. Ms. Francois stated that she would like to Administrative Committee to review the program and work out the details before it gets that far.

Deputy Mayor Vassanella questioned if leaf bags were sold at the Municipal Clerk's Office. He stated that he recalled the bags being sold at the Public Works building on Churchill Avenue. Ms. McCarthy stated that leaf bags were sold at the Municipal Clerk's Office. Deputy Mayor Vassanella also asked for clarification on plans to design a new handbook for governing body members. Ms. McCarthy explained that the current handbook for governing body members would be updated and tailored so that it fits more for Franklin Township. Mr. Glicklich questioned how much leaf bags cost. Ms. McCarthy explained that leaf bags were 50 cents for each bag with a discount of 25 cents for senior citizens. She further explained that a little under \$9,000 was spent each year for a supply of approximately 30,000 bags.

### Elections

- Overall budget was decreased by 58% - from 42,500 to \$18,000, a \$24,500 decrease.
- No recall election.

Deputy Mayor Vassanella questioned if the 2009 Board of Education election was included in the Budget. Ms. McCarthy stated that it was. It was pointed out that legislation had been introduced to put the Board of Education election in with the General election but had not been passed yet. If that legislation were passed then a savings in the Township's election budget would be reflected in the following year.

### Municipal Court

Damaris Santiago, Court Administrator, presented the Municipal Court Budget.

Ms. Santiago reviewed the following:

- Description of the Court Department responsibilities.
  - Process over 10,000 traffic offenses a year
  - 90% of tickets are contested
  - Schedule court appearances for moving, parking and DWI matters
  - Process disorderly persons complaints filed by the police department
  - Take complaints from the general public
  - Process violations from various municipal departments.
  - Domestic violence is a priority.
  - Manage Citizens Dispute Resolution Program
  - All monies due to the County, State and Township are collected and dispersed at the end of the month.
  - Court is in session Tuesday afternoons, Wednesday evenings and all day on Thursday.
- Organization of the Municipal Court – Violations Department.
  - Judicial branch of government.
  - Operates under the assignment and presiding judges of the County.
  - Chief Judge
    - Direct supervision
    - 3-year term appointed by Council
    - Executive head of the department.
  - Municipal Court Administrator
    - Administrator of the department.
    - Manages workflow.
    - Staff consists of 4 full-time employees, 1 part-time employee, 2 municipal court prosecutors and 1 public defender
- Accomplishments
  - Disposed of over 12,000 matters
    - Acceptance through mail, violations borough, collection of payments by credit cards and through the Internet.
  - Backlog has decreased 30%.
  - Schedule for 150 court matters.
  - Continue the positive & successful auditors report.
- Future Outlook
  - Continue education of staff members
  - Continue to provide expeditious handling of all municipal court matters.
- Major Program Areas
  - Video Conferencing – continues to benefit court and police department by eliminating the need to transport prisoners. Provides a great savings to the Township.
  - Metal detector installed for additional security. Has been working effectively.
  - Community Dispute Residential Program continues to be successful.
- Budget Dollars at Work
  - Slightly over \$400,000 total budget for department.

- Over 12,500 matters disposed of last year – approximately 18 through resolution program.
- All inspector matters scheduled for Thursday mornings to increase and dispose of matters at a high efficiency and success rate.
- Decrease of backlog.

There was a brief question and answer period by Council regarding Court expenses. Ms. Francois questioned if acting judges were employees of the Township and if they were under a union like the Police. Mr. Daly stated that they had to be employees of the Township but were not part of a union. There was brief confusion over the cost of cleaning the judge's robes. The total cost for cleaning the judge's robes is \$60.00.

Mayor Levine questioned professional and consulting fees, specifically \$12,500 for interpreters. Deputy Mayor Vassanella questioned if the Township could save money by hiring bi-lingual employees. Ms. Santiago explained that interpreters for legal proceedings had to be certified and approved by the state. She stated that she does assist with guilty pleas or arraignments but actual legal proceedings would require a certified interpreter. Deputy Mayor Vassanella stated his preference that a Township employee receives that certification to save money. Mr. Daly stated that in his experience there was no cost difference between hiring an outside interpreter and using an in-house employee.

Mr. Mettler questioned the cost for books and publications. Statute books need to be purchased every year as they are updated annually and are required. Mr. Mettler questioned why \$600.00 was requested when \$1,000.00 was spent the previous year. Ms. Santiago stated that the court was hoping not to spend that much money this year.

Mr. Daly noted that the public defender had become a contracted employee and only half a year's salary is noted in the budget. The total for public defender's salary should be \$16,000.00 after an additional \$8,000.00 is added from the contract. He further noted other contractual employees of the court.

### Health

Walter Galanowsky, Health Director presented the Health Department Budget.

Mr. Galanowsky reviewed the following:

#### **Franklin Township Health Department FY2009 Budget Hearing**

In FY2008, Franklin Township Health Department continued our mission of ensuring the health of the community by preventing, responding and mitigating environmental health hazards, and providing services, screenings and information for residents to improve individual health and the health of the entire community.

#### **Our township is growing, as evidenced by our Certified Municipal Registrars:**

- 919 Resident births
- 429 Resident deaths
- 3123 Certified vital records

#### **Our Environmental Staff conducted nearly 5,000 inspections, including:**

- 2700 Public health complaint investigations (more than double the 1187 investigated in 1998)
- 1150 Apartment reoccupancy inspections (there are over 4,500 existing apartment units, with possibly another 500 planned)
- Over 700 retail food and temporary food event inspections
- 430 inspections involving septic, wells, schools, pools, lead paint, demolitions, etc.

- Local response to protect our residents from national outbreak incidents, including: Swanson pot pie outbreak recall, the Topps ground beef outbreak recall and the recent outbreak concerns in fresh tomatoes/peppers
  - Investigation and enforcement of public health regulations resulting in court fines totaled \$26,920
  - Issuance of retail food licenses totaled \$102,969
  - Collection of septic, well, permit and plan review fees totaled \$79,180
  - Total revenues collected in FY08 amounted to \$294,183 and did not include the fines of \$26,920 collected by our actions in court.

**New Jersey mandates local health departments to provide specialized Health Promotion activities. FY2008 activities provided by the Health Educator include:**

- Developing communicable disease programs with Franklin Township schools for youth and their families (Youth in our schools were recognized nationally for the hand washing rap they developed under this program)
- Developing a Township Pandemic Influenza Response plan, including a pandemic tabletop exercise
- Provision of community disease prevention programs (such as MRSA, influenza, HIV/AIDS, food borne outbreak prevention)
- Provision of health services aimed at youth, including smoking/substance abuse prevention, bullying prevention and injury prevention.
- Coordination of chronic disease prevention programs, including cancer, hypertension, diabetes, and additional programs aimed at those without health insurance.

**Public Health Nursing activities include:**

- 248 Communicable disease investigations, such as Lyme Disease, Hepatitis, Meningitis, food borne diseases, and a wide variety of other reportable diseases. Franklin Township accounted for almost 20 percent (19.64%) of all the communicable disease investigations in Somerset County and more than one and one-half times the number of cases of the next highest town.
- Provision of bi-weekly Well-baby clinics for uninsured residents, including 268 immunizations to uninsured children
- Audits of schools and child care centers and related community outreach to increase vaccination rates in children.
- Programs to provide necessary preventative services to our uninsured, underinsured, vulnerable populations

**In Closing:**

As indicated in our pie chart, 54% of the funds spent to support public health activities are paid from revenues or grants. In a recent study conducted by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, it was found that the average cost per capita among municipal health departments of our size in New Jersey is \$24.39. Franklin Township's local cost for public health is \$4.89 per capita which is 500% below this state average. This is an indication that we are fulfilling our mission of protecting the health of our community and doing it at a rock bottom price. With the proposed increase in fees for services, we estimate that our revenues should increase considerably in this fiscal year and net cost to the township should be further reduced from the present 46% total.

**Budget Summary FY09**

|                        |           |     |
|------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Health Administration: | \$252,809 | S&W |
|                        | \$9,640   | OE  |
| Medical Services:      | \$79,070  | OE  |
| Health Inspections:    | \$234,590 | S&W |

|                        |           |    |
|------------------------|-----------|----|
|                        | \$10,890  | OE |
|                        |           |    |
| Total:                 | \$587,089 |    |
| FY09 Estimated Revenue | \$350,000 |    |
| Net Cost of Services:  | \$237,089 |    |
| Net % to Budget        | 40%*      |    |

With the proposed increase in fees for FY09, our revenue should increase to \$350,000.

\*With the anticipated award of \$40,000 in public health grants, this percent would be further reduced.

There was a brief question and answer period by Council regarding the Health Department budget. Mayor Levine asked for clarifications on the procedures and costs regarding influenza vaccines. He questioned if there was a way to have the County cover the vaccines without having a loss of service to the residents. Mr. Galanowsky stated that many residents would forego the vaccine without the convenience of acquiring it within the Township. Mayor Levine asked for clarification on REHS. It was explained that REHS means Registered Environmental Health Specialist. Deputy Mayor Vassanella questioned part-time salaries and wages in regards to Animal Control. Mr. Daly explained that Animal Control is now a part of the Police Department and that the department had some staff turnover this past year. While undergoing the transition to a new employee the Animal Control Officer, Katie Nordhaus, was working seven days a week.

Donna Vieiro, Assistant Township Manager, recommended going over the Personnel, Information Technology and Economic Development budgets after the Grants, Tax Collector and Tax Assessor departments.

### Grants

Bonnie von Ohlen, Grants Coordinator, presented the Grants Budget.

Ms. Von Ohlen reviewed the following:

- Department is set up to implement and administer grants for the Township.
- Description of the Grants responsibilities;
  - Research Grants opportunities.
  - Write and prepare Grants for Council approval.
  - Coordinate funds for projects.
  - Report to Grantor agencies, funding agencies and submit reports.
  - Insure a timely draw down for funds.
- Major Projects;
  - Community and Economic Development
  - Open Space and Historic Preservation
  - Planning initiatives
  - Homeland Security initiatives
- Lines of Business;
  - Implement the grants
  - Approximately \$70,000 salary from the Township.
  - Approximately \$52,000 from the CDBG Program for the consultant. Consultant works two days a week.
- Last year;
  - 22 grants received
  - 5 grants outstanding (including Community Development)
  - 0 grants rejected.
  - \$3,205,000 grants revenue received.
  - \$2,500,000 state aid received.
  - \$353,000 Somerset County aid received.
  - \$333,000 Federal aid received – contains Community Development

- \$3,000 private and non-profit aid received.
- CDBG Project
  - Consultant assists Township
  - Program is intensive – only thing that consultant does for two days a week.
  - 45 Houses in program
  - Estimated \$25,000
- Looking forward to more Green Acres funding.
- Grants applied for meet matching funds at least 25% of the time.

There was a brief question and answer period by Council regarding grants line items. Mr. Glicklich questioned money listed in the Community Grant. Mr. Daly clarified that a little over \$62,000 was expended in that grant. Ms. Francois questioned why the CDBG consultant was not listed in Professional Services. Mr. Daly explained that the consultant is paid through the CDBG grant.

### Collector

Carol Langone, Collector presented the Collector Budget.

Ms. Langone reviewed the following:

- Main responsibilities;
  - Billing
  - Collection
  - Recording
  - Enforcement of Tax and Water
- 98.56% collection rate.
- Tax line items, water accounts and fire service accounts.
- Operating Expense Budget - \$23,709
- Encouraging Mortgage Companies to pay online.
  - E-mail file
  - Biggest company provides a check for \$10 Million – processed in 10 minutes
  - Greener
- Future of the office;
  - Redesign front of office to make more cashiers available to the public.
  - Working with Public Works and IT.
  - Install a locked drop box in the lobby to facilitate the public.
- Hired a new Deputy Collector – now back up to full staff.

There was a brief question and answer period by Council regarding Tax Collector expenses. Deputy Mayor Vassanella asked for more clarification of the redesign of the Collector's office. Ms. Langone explained that some of the plexi-glass in the front of the office would be taken away and multiple computers and cash drawers would be installed to have multiple cashiers assisting the public with their payments. Council expressed their approval of the lobby drop box. Mayor Levine thanked the Collector's office for all their hard work, stating that the office takes a lot of heat for the taxes imposed on the public by the Council, Board of Education and everyone else.

### Tax Assessor

Stan Belenky, Tax Assessor, presented the budget for the Tax Assessor Office.

Mr. Belenky reviewed the following:

- Major Responsibilities –
  - Assess each property as of October 1<sup>st</sup> of every tax year.
    - Assessments applied the following year.
  - Calculations of core fees.
    - Increasing

- Under state law.
    - 2.5% on commercial properties.
  - Rollback assessments
    - Completed recently.
  - Chapter 91 – Income and Expense statements for commercial and industrial properties.
    - Done annually
- 5 year abatement program for older homes
  - Up to \$25,000
  - Every time someone gets a permit they are mailed an invitation to file for a 5-year abatement.
- Assess all new construction and renovations on older properties.
- Budget increased significantly.
  - Completely new Assessor's Office
  - Operational difference in comparison to previous years.
  - New office and operation requires different funding.

There was a brief question and answer period by Council regarding the aforesaid items. Mayor Levine noted the increase in tax court appraisal potential and questioned if the increase was due to new assessments. Mr. Belenky clarified that the significant increase was for the purpose of defending the new tax assessments in court. The amount set aside for tax appeals in the past is unrealistic and suggests that tax assessments were not defended in an appeals court. Large municipalities with similar amounts of commercial properties had budgets that ranged from \$300,000 to \$700,000.

Mr. Daly pointed out that, based on spending trends in the past year, the Assessor's Office could have cut their professional consulting budget by \$400,000. However, the need for further legal assistance is expected this year so the professional consulting budget was not cut. The amount of money for tax appeal refunds has also been raised. More appeals and better legal representation is expected from the commercial sector. It is expected that the tax burden of the Township will shift from private homeowners to commercial properties.

Deputy Mayor Vassanella questioned how tax assessments would affect a property that has been stalled or stopped in its development due to the financial crisis of the owner. An incomplete property would still be assessed at its completed value even though the owner cannot complete the project. Mr. Belenky stated that the market would automatically adjust itself and that properties were always in flux. Assessments will adjust with the market and if the market goes down then so will the assessment.

### *Personnel/IT/Economic Development*

Donna Vieiro, Assistant Township Manager presented the budgets for Human Resources, Information Technologies and Economic Development.

#### *Human Resources (Personnel)*

- Budget is flat from last year.
- There has been another change in health insurance.
  - Raven Williams, Office Coordinator, has been assisting employees and retirees with issues.
  - 80% of the Office Coordinator's time has been spent on Horizon and medical issues since July.
- Active year for new hires due to high turnover rate.
- Worker's Compensation is down.
  - 25% reduction in claims
  - Very active safety meeting held monthly
    - Public Works and Police Departments are very active in safety training.
- Flat Line Budget.
  - Some areas were cut.

- Professional Consulting Services – reduced by half due to the operational audit that was not used.
- Other Contractual items –
  - \$12,000 budget last year. Only used \$5,000.
  - Reduced to \$9,300
  - Majority used for Police Officer exams.
  - Large number of retirees and turnover last year that is not expected this year.
- Raven Williams is participating in an MBA program for Human Resource Managing. She is taking advantage of the Township’s education reimbursement and is doing well in her classes.

Deputy Mayor Vassanella questioned the Management Retreat line item. Ms. Vieiro explained that the Retreat is an event where the department heads can spend one day off site to focus on specific tasks, much like the Council Retreat. The Management Retreat did not take place last year. A retreat will take place this year if at all possible.

Deputy Mayor Vassanella questioned why the retreat costs \$1,700, comparing it to the Council Retreat, which requires only a small amount to cover the cost of food. Ms. Vieiro explained that the amount was for the cost of a hotel, food and guest speaker. Ms. Vieiro further explained that hosting the retreat at a hotel or other off-site location was for the purpose of getting the department heads away from their phones, desks and other distractions so that they could focus their combined efforts on individual specific matters. The money set aside in the budget is generally not expended and could be reduced or modified.

Mr. Daly explained that it is good practice for an organization which has a number of professionals handling a number of complex and management issues, come together during the course of the year to have outside insight and motivation. Mr. Daly further explained that the Department Head Retreat was different from the Council Retreat in that the Council Retreat is more of a time to think about goals for the year and the Department Head Retreat is for ongoing institutional tuning and maintenance to keep up the productivity of the Township’s Management.

Ms. Francois stated that the Council was more concerned about the costs for a hotel rather than the motivational speaker, citing a preference to have the Retreat take place on Township property. Mr. Daly explained that the Township has never paid for a hotel, only for food and the motivational speaker. The purpose of having the Retreat off-site is to limit distractions to the management. The Community Senior Center, used for the Council Retreat, would not be an optimal location, as Alice Osipowitz, Director of Parks and Recreation, would have difficulty avoiding distractions.

Mayor Levine questioned why there was no money placed in the Advertising line item. Ms. Vieiro explained that she doesn’t anticipate needing to put any advertisements in the newspaper and plans on relying on the Township website. She further explained that advertisements in the newspaper are very expensive and not cost effective; one ad on a Saturday could cost \$500. She stated that other resources are available, citing the applications that are currently on file, the website and the Township’s television channel.

### Information Technologies

- Hired Help Desk Technician – Ankur Kairawala
  - Asset to department.
  - Handles standard, day-to-day issues, which allows specialists to get larger projects done.
- Working on building renovations.
- PC replacement plan
  - Migrate away from CITRIX
  - Completed this past year.
- Spatial Data Logic Program

- IT Continuity Plan
  - Working with NJIT to develop a continuity plan in the event of a catastrophe.
- House cleaning
  - Spam program
  - Rework Police Department networks.
  - QED and Dialogic
    - Replacing and upgrading the Dialogic system in the next couple of months.

Deputy Mayor Vassanella questioned if the Township was still a part of JAG and cited it as a good, standard resource for municipalities. Ms. Vieiro stated that the Township is no longer a member of JAG but explained that the cable videographer is still a member so the Township still has access to JAG through him.

### Economic Development

- Department has undergone a lot of changes.
  - Full-time staff of 3 has changed to a full-time staff of 1.
- Economic Development Administrator – Jarrett Sutton
  - Business Outreach
  - Business Retention
  - Working with Somerset County Business Partnership.
- Township Manager and Assistant Township Manager also work as liaisons.
- Economic Development Strategic Plan – able to develop and implement.
- Business and Industry Advisory Committee
  - Eco-Tourism Subcommittee is implementing programs for the fall.
- Comprehensive Commercial Broker Listing
  - Interested parties can come to the office and ask for specific locations and size.
- New marketing campaign to attract new businesses to Franklin Township.
- Jarrett Sutton has completed his undergraduate degree in Economics at Rutgers last month.

There was a brief question and answer period by Council regarding the above-mentioned items. Deputy Mayor Vassanella questioned the salary breakdown of the department and if there was still a need for a full-time Redevelopment Administrator. Mr. Daly stated that Deborah Mitchell, the Redevelopment Administrator, is fully involved in working with redevelopers in making things happen and works to keep the residents in redevelopment areas fully informed and helps them with their issues. Deputy Mayor Vassanella questioned why that salary, or part of that salary, could not be drawn from the Economic Development Fund. Mr. Daly explained that there is not enough revenue coming into the Redevelopment Agency. He stated that there is some revenue, providing a chance to reduce. Ms. Mitchell does charge a lot of her time to redevelopers. Deputy Mayor Vassanella questioned why the Redevelopment Administrator couldn't have 50% of her salary charged to the Redevelopment Fund. Mr. Daly explained that there is no mechanism to do that and that the current developers are all Affordable Housing Developers who are currently looking for assistance from the Township and could not afford more fees.

Mr. Daly explained that the Redevelopment Agency made a strategic decision not to pursue a developer for the redevelopment area between Pine Street and Douglas Avenue. Their intention is to work with businesses in the area to rehabilitate and develop their properties. The Redevelopment Administrator is spending a lot of her time working with those businesses. Mr. Mettler explained that the downturn in the economy is affecting this area as well and that projects have to be modified causing a continual amount of research that needs to be done. The Redevelopment Administrator has plenty of things to keep her busy. Deputy Mayor Vassanella stated that he was hoping to have the Redevelopment Administrator's salary covered by other means as a way to ease costs to the taxpayers of Franklin Township.

Ms. Francois questioned the amount of time being spent on Business Advocacy Retention. Ms. Vieiro stated that her staff didn't get a lot of time to work on work force

development in the past year and that they are currently working with Julia West Johnson and the Raritan Valley Community College, as well as people from the Department of Labor, to increase work force development. She further stated that a lot of staff time is spent on the Hamilton Street program. While the percentages presented to the Council accurately reflect the division of staff time in the office for a year, it should be noted that the percentages fluctuate during the course of the year. Ms. Francois expressed her concerns over the need to expand corporate ratables and attract businesses to the area. Mr. Daly stated that the department also needed to help with site location. Ms. Vieiro stated that the department is working on attracting various kinds of businesses based on site locations and that the past year was used to reintroduce the Township to the community and make contacts. Ms. Vieiro asserted that expanding corporate ratables was definitely a priority and stated that large ratables are expected to come in the next several months.

Ms. Vieiro provided the Council with updated information regarding health insurance. She stated that when the budget was prepared in May the new health insurance had not been set up yet. There have been billing issues with Horizon and the first bill had only been recently received. That bill was much higher than anticipated and caused a new projection in estimated health insurance costs. Corrections were also made in prescription costs.

Mr. Mettler asked for clarification of the issue and questioned if the insurance agency, BGIA, provided the Township with an accurate estimation of health insurance costs. Ms. Vieiro stated that the insurance agency's estimate was off by about \$300,000. Ms. Francois questioned if the agency provided quarterly estimates. Ms. Vieiro stated that the estimate was annual. Ms. Francois and Mr. Mettler stated that it was too early to make a conclusion but the issue would have to be noted. Mayor Levine noted that, unless things adjust during the course of the year, medical insurance costs have increased 13% from last year.

#### Chief Finance Officer – Treasury, Finance and Revenue & All Other Lines of Revenue

Ross Bobal, Director of Finance, presented the budgets for the Treasury, Finance and Revenue and all other lines of revenue.

#### Department of Finance and Revenue

- Department of Finance and Revenue
  - Comprised of Purchasing, Grant Management, Tax Collector, Tax Assessor and the Treasury.
  - These budgets were already presented by their respective departments.
- Treasury
  - Accounts Payable and Receivable
  - Cash Management
  - Payroll
  - Benefit Management
  - Time and attendance records for all personnel.
  - Investment of funds
    - Majority for the custody and security of funds.
    - Maintain that funds are protected.

Deputy Mayor Vassanella questioned the purpose of the attendance line item in the Treasury Department. Mr. Bobal explained that this was for payroll records and included the accumulation of vacation time and sick time.

Mr. Mettler congratulated Mr. Bobal, stating that it was National Payroll Week.

Mr. Daly left at 9:16 p.m.

#### All Other Lines of Revenue

Mr. Bobal explained the use of surplus in the Budget and clarified the changes that resulted from the change in insurance. He further explained that "Miscellaneous Revenues"

refers to the various fees and permits that the Township collects. He stated that the Township could only anticipate the same amount of revenue that it received the previous year and clarified that the “expended” line on the paperwork given to the Council is actually the amount of realized revenue.

The Council asked for additional clarification and posed a question regarding the Township Clerk’s revenue, citing a possible error. Mr. Bobal stated that he would look into the matter and provide the Council with an update.

Deputy Mayor Vassanella questioned the use of Hotel/Motel taxes and questioned how vacancy issues would affect the Township’s income. He expressed concern that hotel vacancies would cause that number to drop. Mr. Bobal stated that the anticipated income from hotel room taxes was a conservative number and did not reflect the amount received last year. Ms. Vieiro stated that she had spoken with the people running the hotels and was told that the occupancy rate is actually higher this year, running closer to 60% rather than the 40% or 50% of the previous year. Deputy Mayor Vassanella stated that this was a good sign.

Ms. Francois asked for clarification on the amount of taxes that were budgeted and expended. Mr. Bobal explained the breakdown of the total amount of taxes collected and informed the Council which lines were for local taxes and which went to various other tax rates, such as School, Open Space and County taxes. Mayor Levine pointed out that the numbers presented represented an even 4% increase on the levy.

Mr. Glicklich questioned various items on the Interlocal Agreements lines, asking for clarification. Ms. Vieiro explained the Interlocal Agreements in the Police Department and the Department of Public Works. She stated that the agreement with the Department of Public Works was for the maintenance of Board of Education vehicles. That agreement included the maintenance of the vehicles, the salaries of the employees and possibly the cost of gas. She amended that the cost of gas might be billed separately.

Mr. Bobal explained that the Finance office has been trying to gather all the receivables owed to the Township. This past year the Finance department billed the Library for money it has owed on the pension for the past three years. Finance is currently making sure that money is being collected.

Mr. Glicklich questioned the amount of money reserved for uncollected taxes. Mr. Bobal explained that there is very little that can be done about that anticipation. Mr. Glicklich pointed out that the Collector stated that collection is pretty tight. Mr. Bobal stated that the numbers are based on all taxes and not just the municipal budget.

Deputy Mayor Vassanella questioned what the schedule would be for the adoption of the Budget. No schedule had been made yet and the discussion of the schedule and the Budget Wrap-Up would be held at the next Council Meeting.

Ms. Eberle left at 9:32 p.m.

### ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion made by Ms. François, seconded by Mr. Mettler and unanimously approved, meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Approved: *As Submitted.*

Brian D. Levine, Mayor

Date: *November 10, 2008*

Ann Marie McCarthy, Township Clerk