

**TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE MEETING – BUDGET WORK SESSION  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
Wednesday, April 14, 2010, 4:30 PM**

**MINUTES**

**OPENING; ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Mach. Those present were Mayor Mach, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Lance, Mr. Lascari and Mr. Seal. Also present was Clerk Pizzaia and CFO Barbara Emery.

**FLAG SALUTE**

The flag salute was conducted.

**SUNSHINE STATEMENT**

Mayor Mach read the following statement: Notice of this meeting has been sent to two newspapers of general circulation in which notice was given of the date, time, place and general agenda in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

**DISCUSSION OF 2010 BUDGET**

Mayor Mach explained that this meeting is a continuation of the budget process. The first budget work session was held on March 31. At that meeting, the Committee went through the budget, line by line, eliminating expenses wherever possible. The purpose of this meeting is to make further cuts, as there is an approximate \$300,000 that still needs to be eliminated from the budget in order to maintain a 0% tax rate. The township is living off the fund balance, which is being depleted.

Mr. Lance added that the current fund balance is approximately \$1.7 million. As the budget now stands, we would be spending an approximate \$1.2 million, which leaves a \$500,000 balance. Mr. Lance said that the Committee really needs to cut \$600,000 to avoid a municipal tax next year. Since most operating costs have been cut where possible, the Committee needs to look at personnel costs.

Mr. Lance said that Mr. Benbrook, Township Attorney, has agreed to take a 5% cut in pay. The Committee has already agreed to cut their salaries by 5% in this year's budget.

Mr. Lascari explained a voluntary severance package for employees that he is proposing for the Committee to approve. Basically, the package allows employees on a voluntary basis to resign and receive severance pay based on their service time with Blairstown. The employee will receive regular pay until

June 30<sup>th</sup>, at which time the severance pay would commence. Employees currently receiving medical benefits would continue to do so until December 31, 2010. If there is not enough interest from the employees in the voluntary plan, Mr. Lascari said that the Committee would have to make some tough decisions with regard to personnel.

Mr. Seal commented that he cannot imagine coming up with \$600,000 in cuts from personnel. He fears that this type of cutting will be putting the township in a hole that they can never get out of.

Robert Kise, Department of Public Works, asked the Committee if furloughs or pay decreases are an option in lieu of letting people go. The Committee indicated that some sort of givebacks could be considered.

Mr. Lance said that it is possible that 20% of employees' pay could be cut to get to the amount needed to be cut. He feels, however, that it is better to let someone go rather than to have an entire department hurt.

Mr. Kise asked if it were possible to move the open space tax over to a municipal tax to cover the deficit. Mr. Lance explained that this is not allowed, and that open space tax can only be used for specific purposes.

Mr. Lascari reported that he has performed a non-scientific survey. He listed municipalities with similar populations and amount of roads to see how Blairstown compares with other municipalities in the amount of Public Works personnel employed. The survey also listed different scenarios whereby our current DPW personnel would be decreased from the current eight (8) members to seven (7) and six (6) members. Mr. Seal said that Mr. Lascari's survey does not take into account the work the DPW employees do for the water company.

Gary Nemeckay, Department of Public Works, said that if salaries are decreased, he cannot make that up, but if he were to go to a four day work week with a corresponding 20% cut in pay, at least he would have the opportunity to seek other employment on that one day. The Committee agreed that this could be an option.

Robert DePuy, Department of Public Works Supervisor, asked if the union employees in the township were going to be looked at for possible cuts. Mr. Anderson replied that everything is on the table at this time. He said that cutting back on police hours is a possibility, but he needs to speak with the Police Director before speaking anymore on this.

Mr. Lance asked Mr. Lascari to include the option of working fewer hours with a corresponding reduction in pay in his proposed severance plan. The Committee was in agreement to add this option.

Mr. Lascari summarized his proposed plan, which allows for severance pay based on the amount of time employed by the township, with a maximum of 12 weeks severance pay. (Plan attached.) Employees currently receiving medical benefits will continue to do so until December 31, 2010. Any employee may opt for reduced work hours with corresponding reduction in salary. Mr. Lascari made a motion to approve the voluntary severance plan as outlined on the attached worksheet, which was seconded by Mr. Lance.

Roll call vote: AYE – Anderson, Lance, Lascari, Seal, Mach  
Carl Dieffenbach, Plumbing Subcode Official, asked why the Construction Department was not being given the same opportunity the other employees were being offered, such as coming back to the Committee for voluntary reductions to save money. He said that the Construction Department was told they would meet with the Committee or its representatives and this never happened. Mr. Seal said that Mr. Dieffenbach is correct in his statement that the Construction Department was told that someone from the Committee would meet with them. The Committee offered to meet with Mr. Dieffenbach in Closed Session at 7:15 before the regular meeting tonight.

### **FROM THE PUBLIC**

Mayor Mach asked if there were any further comments from the public. Kyle Dalrymple, Police Officer, said that no one has approached the officers for ideas on reducing the budget. He said that the Public Works employees knew in advance and have presented ideas, but the officers were not told. Mr. Dalrymple said that the director has not been present to pass this information on to the officers. The Public Works employees responded that they were not told about this, and Mayor Mach confirmed that there was no formal request for input.

Mr. Dalrymple said that the officers have ideas to help save money and would like the opportunity to speak with the Committee.

Mr. Seal asked about open space monies and the Recreation Director's salary. There is a question of whether her salary can be taken from open space tax monies. Mr. Seal will ask Mr. Benbrook for a legal opinion on whether this can be done.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

As there were no further comments from the public, Mr. Lascari made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Lance, with all members in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 6:06 pm.

Submitted by:

Phyllis E. Pizzaia, RMC  
Municipal Clerk