

CHESTERFIELD TOWNSHIP BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING
FEBRUARY 22, 2024

The Township Committee met on the above date in the Municipal Complex, 295 Bordentown-Chesterfield Road, Chesterfield, New Jersey. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Matt Litt at 5:30 pm with a flag salute and moment of silence dedicated to Waleed, his family and his Chesterfield friends who are grieving him tonight.

The Open Public Meetings Act Statement was read and compliance noted.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Present: Belinda Blazic, Shreekant Dhopte, Rebecca Hughes, Denise Koetas-Dale and Matt Litt

Also present: Caryn M. Hoyer, Township Clerk and Wendy A. Wulstein, CFO.

AGENDA MATTER(S) REQUIRING RECUSAL(S) – None.

Ms. Wulstein stated the BAC met with Denise and Rebecca. The BAC would like the Township Committee to review the vehicle purchases and landscaping. She stated these comments were the same that the Township Committee had as well. Ms. Koetas-Dale agree they had pointed out the same thing the Township Committee talked about. Vehicle Purchase was a big concern. Ms. Hughes asked stated there are incentive programs for EV vehicles. She stated someone from the BAC said the reassessment will be an issue. Ms. Koetas-Dale stated we need to have an in-depth look at the road within Old York Village. We need to keep them on our radar. Ms. Hughes stated the BAC thought it would be helpful to have the information sooner to better prepare prior to the first BAC meeting. Ms. Wulstein stated that previously that was done, however there was a late start getting the BAC appointed. Ms. Wulstein stated the BAC did not feel they needed to do a presentation. Mr. Litt asked about funds to do the mailing for education on the reassessment. Ms. Wulstein that will be part of the overall cost of the reassessment. Ms. Koetas-Dale would like to have an education session for the Township Committee regarding the reassessment. Ms. Wulstein state the vendor who does the revaluation will defend the assessments on behalf of the Township for 3-4 years.

Tom Flaherty – 151 Chesterfield-Georgetown Road – He stated he is the chairperson of the Compressor and Pipeline Task Force. He stated in 2018 there was an air quality test done for a baseline prior to the compressor station going operational. He stated the taskforce would like a follow-up test and the cost is \$29,500. He stated the compressor stated was connected in 2021 and they want to do a follow-up air test. He stated there are harmful emissions in the report and reviewed same with the Township Committee. The quote for the follow-up test was provided by Environmental Health Projects (EHP) and EHP will give a report to the Township Committee. He stated that there is no employee charged with overseeing this and believes it is worth the costs due to the health concern. Ms. Koetas-Dale asked how long the testing units were in place. Mr. Flaherty stated

30 days and they used a different monitor than they are now. Ms. Koetas-Dale was concerned that the cost is a lot more than the previous one. There are a lot of other services quotes so maybe eliminate some of those extra costs. Mr. Flaherty stated originally it was much higher than present proposal. He stated the Township received 2.7 million in August of 2019 earmarked for impacts to the community. Ms. Blazic stated the compressor station is already subject to air testing by federal and state agencies. She needs to understand why it is needed and asked if there is a reason for concern. Mr. Flaherty stated NJDEP issues them a permit to pollute. The DEP looks at the aggregate for all of NJ for pollutants. He stated that Williams Pipeline has been providing the required information. He stated the school is within 1 mile of the compressor station and emissions can travel a couple miles. Ms. Blazic stated that technology is a lot better now. They are electric engines which reduce the amount of emissions. She stated a lot of safeguards are already in place. She just wants to make sure it is money well spent. Ms. Koetas-Dale remembers being at the school with a room full of people very concerned. This was promised to the residents. They have not reported anything in 3 quarters. Mr. Flaherty they have had periodic meetings with Transco and they are very good and transparent. NJNG not so easy to work with. Mr. Dhopte stated this is the second part of the testing and we need to get the readings done. If they come back good, then no need to do again. Mr. Flaherty stated that the nesting may need to be ongoing. Mr. Dhopte asked what other towns are doing. Is there a certain event that should require additional testing. Ms. Wulstein stated the committee needs to decide whether \$30,000 is in the budget. Putting it in the budget does not approve that proposal. There is a separate protocol for awarding a contract. There would need to be more than one proposal. She stated that groundwater testing was previously done as well. Mr. Flaherty stated they did well testing but air quality testing would give most date. He believes it should be ongoing and done every few years. Mr. Litt stated he hopes the Taskforce continues to keep on this. Ms. Blazic thanked the Taskforce for volunteering but it would be helpful if they providing positive to the community as well such as the safeguards that are already in place. There are required things in place to help protect the public. Ms. Koetas-Dale stated that EC members Nancy Scarafile and Sara Dyson attend the Taskforce meetings.

Ms. Wulstein went through a summary of her memo to the committee. The website line item will be increased by \$9,600; legal line item reduced by \$7,500; police salary increase of \$30,000; DPW includes 1 new employee for half a year and 2 new employees for a quarter year but will require additional discussion for later; buildings and grounds increase due to ash tree removals; vehicle maintenance increased due to the older vehicles; Administrator 60% fringe benefits on \$145,000. She stated that there will be no impact to this budget from the cannabis. It was confirmed that construction is requesting two suvs. One amount was put in the budget last year and they have requested an additional one this year. Streets and Road had overtime included so she will be able to reduce that amount by \$15,000 and there is no change with health benefits. She stated if you are comfortable with these numbers there will be about \$925,000 out of CAP. She stated then there is the levy CAP which will have a tax impact around \$70 for the average tax payer. If the committee is ok with these numbers she will run the numbers to get a more exact amount. She recommends going to the maximum amount and this is consistent with her recommendation each year.

There was discussion regarding another meeting. Ms. Hughes asked how we justify asking the residents to vote but don't make any cuts. Ms. Blazic stated she is concerned with how we can stabilize taxes at what point do we start cutting. Ms. Koetas-Dale asked what are we going to cut. Ms. Hughes understands the state mandates. Ms. Wulstein stated if you cut taxes now you will take the hit when it goes to referendum. Ms. Hughes stated police get a vehicle every year, the air testing would be great but can we really afford it. Ms. Wulstein stated that if we reduce line items she is still going to recommend moving the tax rate to the maximum. She stated they are all valid points and has a 5 year plan she can share with the committee. Ms. Hughes stated we should look at this globally. Mr. Litt stated we are only responsible for approximately 12% of the total taxes. Ms. Wulstein stated that maybe some things happen this year that could help kick the vote down the road. One time income doesn't fix the problem. She stated we are using \$150,000 more surplus that last year. This is going the wrong way. We need to lower the impact for when this goes to referendum.

Ms. Koetas-Dale made a motion seconded by Mr. Dhopte to open the meeting to public comment. Hearing none, Ms. Blazic made a motion seconded by Mr. Dhopte to close public comments.

Ms. Koetas-Dale made a motion seconded by Mr. Dhopte to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 PM. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Caryn M. Hoyer, RMC
Township Clerk