

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
TOWNSHIP BOARD BUDGET DELIBERATIONS MEETING - **APPROVED** -
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864-1198
853-4000, Town Hall Room
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2010 **6:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Supervisor McGillicuddy, Treasurer Brixie, Trustees Dreyfus, Ochberg, Veenstra (6:04 P.M.)
ABSENT: Clerk Helmbrecht, Trustee LeGoff
STAFF: Township Manager Gerald Richards, Director of Community Planning & Development Mark Kieselbach, Director of Engineering & Public Works Ray Severy, Police Chief Dave Hall, EMS/Fire Chief Fred Cowper, Assistant Manager/Human Resources Director Paul Brake, Director of Finance Diana Hasse, Director of Information Technology Stephen Gebes

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER
Supervisor McGillicuddy called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS
Supervisor McGillicuddy led the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. ROLL CALL
The secretary called the roll of the Board.
4. PUBLIC REMARKS
Supervisor McGillicuddy opened and closed Public Remarks.
5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
Treasurer Brixie moved to approve the agenda as submitted. Seconded by Trustee Ochberg.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 4-0.

6. PRESENTATION OF THE 2011 BUDGET
Township Manager Richards highlighted the Introduction to the 2011 Recommended Budget.

Finance Director Hasse gave an overview of the 2011 Recommended Budget.

Board members and staff discussed the following:

- Appreciation to staff for the proposed “bare bones” budget
- Appreciation for the continued conservative approach to the budget while maintaining operations
- Appreciation to the Township Manager for multiple meetings with residents and staff
- Budget supports Township Board goals
- Appreciation that the 2+ months of reserve operating budget was not used to balance the budget
- Request for staff to correct Page 11 and 12 relative to changing .30 mill to .33 mill for the Land Preservation millage
- Passage of the Headlee override (.8 mill) would make closing of the Central Fire Station, Towar Recreation Center, the Transfer Station and eliminating (2) school resource officer positions unnecessary in 2012
- Possibility of looking at a four (4) day work week even with passage of the Headlee override if there is strong employee and community support
- Need to amend contract language to provide the option of implementing furloughs regardless of passage of the Headlee override
- Implications of reduced police officer personnel relative to increased crime within Meridian Township
- Effect vacant positions have and would continue to have on police services under the proposed base line budget

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- Reduction in police personnel affects the ability for police officers to engage in self-initiated calls
- Self-initiated calls (e.g., traffic stops) produce warrant arrests, drunk drivers, etc.
- Fewer police officers have an impact on activities within the Township
- Effect of removing school resource officers
- Anticipated changes to response time for 911 calls with reduced road patrol officers
- Police Department currently staffs four (4) officers and one (1) Sergeant on the road
- Staffing of four (4) officers and one (1) Sergeant on the road is not an indicator of vacations, sick time, compensatory time and training
- Police Department road patrol frequently staffed at three (3) officers and one (1) Sergeant Police Chief statement that it takes 4.2 officers to place one person on a 24/7 shift
- Vacant positions within the Police Department include the Assistant Chief of Police, one (1) Training Sergeant and two (2) road patrol officers
- If Headlee override passes, three (3) road patrol officer positions will be funded
- Need to separate emotion and fear from factual data
- Board member belief there is no trend toward large increases in either property or violent crime
- If the Headlee override passes, .3 mill would be levied in the first year, approximately 80% of which would be used to restore police and fire positions
- Board member statement that the Township has a smaller Fire Department staff with a greater number of administrators compared to the Police Department
- Three (3) fire stations v. one (1) administrative post for the Police Department
- Fire Chief statement that 5% of police calls are emergencies, while 95% of calls received by the Fire Department are emergency based
- Fire Department personnel respond as a team and always has a leader with each team
- Fire leader/officer is in command and responsible to oversee the firefighters and their operations
- Fire and EMS/personnel are assigned nine (9) 24-hour shifts in a 28-day period
- Mix of the three (3) fire stations and the way staff is scheduled on 24-hour shifts necessitates a different situation than in other departments
- Effect vacant positions have and would continue to have on Fire/EMS services
- Current vacant positions require other fire departments (through mutual aid) to respond to some of Meridian Township's calls
- Reduction in stand-by services due to fewer personnel
- 20% reduction in fire personnel for 2012 would equate to five (5) fewer firefighters
- Reducing the total number of Fire/EMS personnel in 2012 would result in costly overtime to keep three (3) stations open
- Closing the Central Fire Station and elimination of one ambulance in 2012 would result in a corresponding reduction in revenue from ambulance runs
- Number of Fire/EMS runs from January-August, 2010 resulted in a \$50,000 increase in revenue from the same time period in 2009
- Request for staff to provide an analysis comparing runs and the amount collected to the cost of staffing a firefighter
- Appreciation for adoption of some recommendations made by the Budget Work Group
- Staff reviewed fees and costs recommended for review by the Budget Work Group
- Virtually all recreation program fees are proposed to increase in 2011
- Staff to provide Board members with recommended fees for digital information
- Sick leave incentive, furloughs and a four (4) day work week are part of contract negotiations
- Staff to provide clarification to Board members regarding who has authority to distribute Parks & Recreation capital expenditures
- Staff reminder that the Board is the final authority in approval of the budget
- Park Millage Funds to be used to include a dog park in Legg Park in spite of public objection
- Board member concern with the proposed upgrade of Legg Park
- If Headlee override passes, three vacant (3) Fire/EMS personnel positions will be restored
- Explanation of the Employee Recognition Program
- Balance between employee compensation and maintaining a balanced budget in a municipal government service industry
- Surveys of other municipal employees indicated compensation and benefits for Meridian Township staff is in the "middle"
- Number of township collective bargaining units has evolved over a period of time

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- Appreciation that employee mental health programs were not eliminated in the recommended budget
- Need to include new fees for electronic assessing and tax rolls and their corresponding revenues
- Elimination of the secretary position within the Assessing Department due to retirement and promotion activity
- Inclusion of the proposed addition of an IT intern in the IT staffing plan on Page 142
- Subtraction of a .5 planner position from the Community Planning and Development staffing plan on Page 144
- Subtraction of a .5 planner position from the Community Planning and Development Personnel Summary on Page 83
- Staff to rectify discrepancy between total staff of 127 on Page 144 and the graph depiction of 128 on Page 4
- Budget Work Group recommendation to eliminate two (2) planning positions added at the end of its tenure but not discussed during its previous meetings
- Four planners staff the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and the Environmental Commission in addition to facilitating rezonings, special use permits, wetland use permits, the long range Master Plan and the Capital Improvements Program
- Reduction of two (2) planners would reduce the planning staff by 50%
- Suggestion to eliminate the \$15,000 recommended for LEAP (Lansing Economic Area Partnership) dues and use it to fund the Fourth of July Celebration
- Suggestion for the Township Board to hear a presentation by Denyse Ferguson, President and CEO of LEAP regarding LEAP's activities
- Regional benefits of belonging to LEAP
- LEAP is a private/public partnership which desires additional private investment
- Reduction of membership dues by LEAP, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission and the Michigan Municipal League
- Roles and responsibilities of LEAP v. Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
- Tri-County Regional Planning Commission is comprised of seventeen (17) community members
- Tri-County Regional Planning Commission is the metropolitan planning organization required by federal law
- Millions of dollars in federal transportation funds "go through" Tri-County Regional Planning Commission and its regional planning process
- LEAP has the regionalism arm of the economic development focus
- Recent survey revealed Township residents value economic development
- Wisdom of using a regional approach when looking at the economic factors in the community
- Outsourcing the payroll function would be a cost savings assuming a retirement of the person performing that function
- Staff to designate dollar amounts of the 13 recommendations identified as other cost saving and cost avoidance changes on Page 5
- Anticipated IT enhancements include, but not limited to, replacing a portion of the core infrastructure to maintain (and possibly reduce) the current employee base at a high level of productivity and at a level which supports all enhanced services and increased band width
- Most police cars and ambulances have computers which allow instant messaging clients to be installed to provide communication between police and fire personnel
- Explanation of the recommendation for four (4) ten (10) hour work days
- Extended hours would be useful to the public who work an 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. workday
- Details of the four (4) ten (10) hour work days must be negotiated
- Discussions with employees indicated interest only in a four day work week
- Some police personnel already work ten hour days
- If enough personnel voluntarily reduced their ten hour work day to 9-½ hours, some furlough time could be avoided
- Benefit of a ten hour work day when enacting furlough hours
- Township Manager discussion with Bloomfield Township, which implemented a four day work schedule, noted satisfaction by both employees and residents
- Bloomfield Township also realized significant savings and energy costs through closing of the building for one additional day
- Public hearing for the budget scheduled for the October 5, 2010 Board Meeting
- Budget will be an item on the agenda until it is approved, typically the last meeting in October

- Additional budget deliberation meeting scheduled for September 28, 2010 unnecessary

7. PUBLIC REMARKS

Supervisor McGillicuddy opened Public Remarks.

Tim McCarthy, 6076 Columbia, Haslett, expressed concern with millage language for the CATA renewal in August, specifically as it related to the Headlee amendment. He also addressed a Board comment relative to the ability to reduce, given Township history of a lean budget. Mr. McCarthy questioned whether taxpayers should be held at large so the Township may maintain an accounting practice of the year-to-year carryover. He expressed concern that crime statistics were presented as a scare tactic to sway residents to pass the Headlee amendment. Mr. McCarthy spoke to the duration of the Headlee override amendment.

Vance Kincaid, 4530 Nakoma Drive, Okemos, expressed appreciation to the Township Manager and Finance Director for their concise snapshot of the proposed budget. He spoke in support of maintaining basic services through fairness, equity and creative solutions in these difficult economic times. Mr. Kincaid also noted support of regional cooperation to provide these services. He suggested electronic debiting of taxes and expressed opposition to closing the Central Fire Station.

Daria Schlaga, 2446 Burcham Drive, East Lansing, suggested large stores in the township pay a special fee for police response to retail theft. She believed Meridian Township taxpayers are being asked to subsidize these big box stores.

Supervisor McGillicuddy closed Public Remarks.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Supervisor McGillicuddy adjourned the meeting at 8:41 P.M.

SUSAN MCGILLICUDDY
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

MARY M. G. HELMBRECHT, CMC
TOWNSHIP CLERK

Sandra K. Otto, Secretary