

WILSON BOROUGH
NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA
December 29, 2016

A Special Meeting of December 2016 of the Council of The Borough of Wilson was held in the Guy B. Tomaino Public Safety Building at 2040 Hay Terrace, Easton, PA. President Verenna called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Roll call followed.

PRESENT:

James McGowan
Leonard Feinberg
Tony Verenna
Daniel Schaffer

Scott Palinkas
David Jones
Pamela Taylor
Louis Starniri

ABSENT:

Russell Lipari

Also present were: Fire Chief Joseph Sipel, Police Chief Steven Parkansky, Solicitor Stanley Margle, Director of Public Works Gregory Drake and Code Officer Paul Corriere.

CAUCUS:

Council entered in a Caucus at 6:02 pm and exited at 6:18 pm. The discussion concerned terms and conditions of employment as allowed under section 708-A1 of the open meetings law.

BUDGET DISCUSSIONS WITH DEPARTMENT HEADS:

Mr. Verenna opened the meeting with a chance for all department heads to comment.

Mr. Drake said his original budget was not a “wish list” but he did manage to make cuts of \$67,060.

Chief Parkansky agreed that his budget as originally submitted was not a “wish list”. He made cuts of \$13,000 to his budget but warned Council that it is now a bare bones budget. He also stated the cuts made will not cause danger or harm to officers or residents.

Mr. Starniri apologized for his use of the term “wish list” at the previous meeting. He said department heads come in with what they would like and Council’s job is to say what the Borough can afford. He felt there was no effort to cut or come to a middle ground. He thanked Ms. Garcia for meeting with department heads and Council President to make thousands in cuts including \$43,600 to the office budget.

Chief Sipel also agreed that he did not present a “wish list”. Ninety percent of the Fire Department budget is salaries which are contractual. Out of a possible \$33,000, the chief cut \$7,850.

Mr. Verenna noted that Ms. Garcia is working on an Ordinance with Solicitor Margle that will allow Borough Real Estate Taxes to be paid on an installment plan.

Mr. Feinberg suggested the pool be closed for 1 year. He said it will save the Borough the amount of one mill of taxes. Mr. Jones felt the equipment would go bad in that time frame. Mr. Drake said he didn’t believe it would. Mr. Jones said closing the pool should be a Borough vote and suggested searching for grants for the pool. Mr. Jones also reviewed a few line item questions at this time.

PRESENTATION OF MATTERS BY RESIDENTS AND TAXPAYERS:

Many residents commented. Most were to disagree with salary adjustments for office staff. Some comments are noted below:

Ruth Harvey of 1905 Lehigh Street wanted to discuss salary adjustments for office staff and why they remained unchanged.

Mr. Fran Roscioli of 2426 Hay Street said Council needs to take away raises or give raises and make employees pay for healthcare.

Ms. Cristie Caldwell of 43 N. 18th Street said she feels bad for Police and Fire for having to make cuts and believes the office should be getting quotes for all purchases and services.

Former Council person Ms. Joan Lilly-Kemmerer of 503 S 21st Street spoke directly from a list of notes. She said “Ms. Garcia doesn’t live in Wilson so she doesn’t care. Ms. Garcia’s only experience was as a clerk and Ms. Garcia said she needed Mr. Feinberg in the office to help her for two years. She isn’t qualified and she shouldn’t get what others get.” She went on to say “Mr. Corriere can’t pass his tests and has no license. Mr. Wamsley made his job full time with paid holidays. Mr. Drake got himself a contract with 4% raises and extra paid vacation days. This has never been done!” She then went to accuse Mr. Feinberg of malfeasance in office saying, “Mr. Margle said Mr. Feinberg was illegally making money off of pictures posted on the Wilson Borough web-page.” Mr. Feinberg explained the pictures are posted through a site called Fotki and he gets no money from purchases.

Mr. Margle intervened to tell Ms. Lilly-Kemmerer that she had the floor to speak on budget review, not make personal attacks on Council and employees.

Ms. Brittany Silverthorn of 2301A Hay Street asked if a volunteer or student could help with a website and if raises could be spread out over more years.

Mr. Gene Lienhard of 1824 Northampton Street asked that the pool and library not be closed. He also requested that the swim team be brought back. Mr. Palinkas stated that Mr. Lipari does not want a swim team back. Mr. Starniri noted that the swim team left before the slide was placed.

Mr. Starniri explained that the manager had been hired at a low rate. He said to keep talent you have to pay what is fair. Replacing the manager could cost even more than the proposed salary. Ms. Taylor added that the office staff needs to receive the same respect as the employees in uniform get. The manager has a great deal of responsibility in running the day to day operations of the Borough.

Ms. Joan Lilly Kemmerer asked how much money is in CDs at the moment and why that isn’t being used. Mr. Starniri said that money is only for big improvement/emergencies and can never be replaced. Mr. Jones stated that part of a CD was used to fill the deficit last year and that is part of the reason why the Borough has a deficit again this year.

Ms. Donna Schoeneck of 105 S. 17th Street asked that the pool not be closed.

Solicitor Margle asked if the audience was more upset by the tax increase or the salary increases. The audience agreed it was the salary increases. He noted that the proposed salary increases will make up less than fifty cents per month of the tax increase.

CAUCUS:

Council entered in a Caucus at 8:20 pm and exited at 8:40 pm. The discussion concerned terms and conditions of employment as allowed under section 708-A1 of the open meetings law.

Motion by Mr. Schaffer to advertise the amended 2017 budget with a two mill increase. Second by Mr. Feinberg. Council unanimously agreed.

Motion by Mr. Feinberg to advertise the 2017 tax ordinance at 17.5 mills. Second by Ms. Taylor. Council concurred.

Motion by Mr. Palinkas to close the pool for one season. Second by Mr. Feinberg. Roll call vote followed. Yes votes cast by Mr. Palinkas and Mr. Feinberg. No votes cast by Mr. McGowan, Mr. Verenna, Ms. Taylor, Mr. Jones, Mr. Starniri and Mr. Schaffer. Motion failed.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Feinberg made a motion to adjourn at 8:43 pm. Second by Mr. Starniri and council unanimously agreed.

JILL A. GARCIA
BOROUGH MANAGER