

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
TOWNSHIP BOARD BUDGET DELIBERATIONS MEETING - **APPROVED** -
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864-1198
853-4000, Town Hall Room
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2009 **6:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Supervisor McGillicuddy, Clerk Helmbrecht, Treasurer Brixie, Trustees Dreyfus, LeGoff, Ochberg (7:02 P.M.), Veenstra (7:03 P.M.)
ABSENT: None
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, EMS Coordinator Greg Hammond, Assistant Manager/Human Resources Director Paul Brake, Director of Finance Diana Hasse, Director of Parks & Recreation LuAnn Maisner, Director of Information Technology Stephen Gebes, Attorney Michael Woodworth, Attorney Andria Ditschman

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor McGillicuddy called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Supervisor McGillicuddy led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

The secretary called the roll of the Board.

4. PUBLIC REMARKS

Supervisor McGillicuddy opened Public Remarks.

Marilyn Britten, 1874 Birchwood Drive, Okemos, asked questions regarding several components of the 2010 Fire Department budget.

Ganesh Reddy, 3614 Ponderosa Drive, Okemos, voiced concern that cost savings for line items in the budget were not delineated and urged the Board to delete two (2) department head positions. He spoke to many of the items contained in the 2010 Recommended Budget.

Mary LaPorte, 2176 Seminole Drive, Okemos, expressed concern with the recommended closing of the Central Fire Station, noting that health and safety must come first.

Sonny France, 4932 Grandview, Okemos, addressed the issue of fire personnel and the recommended closing of the Central Fire Station.

Lynne Page, President, Briarwood Homeowners Association, 3912 Raleigh Drive, Okemos, voiced concern that budget priorities should be addressed prior to money being designated for the Okemos Road Enhancement Project.

Supervisor McGillicuddy closed Public Remarks.

5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Treasurer Brixie moved to approve the agenda as submitted. Seconded by Clerk Helmbrecht.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

6. 2010 BUDGET

Township Manager Richards offered an introduction to the recommended 2010 Budget.

Finance Director Hasse gave an overview of the recommended 2010 Budget.

Board members and staff discussed the following:

- Request for facts which determined that two (2) fire stations can deliver the same degree of service as three (3)
- Request for an outline of the benefits, including costs, of closing the Central Fire Station
- Expenses of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Art Walk Festival
- Elimination of the Township's share of the Okemos Road Enhancement Project
- Configuration of the Motor Pool budget
- Inclusion of the DDA Budget as the DDA is a separate legal entity
- Public suggestion for furlough days similar to state employees
- Cut salaries across the board in lieu of layoffs
- Elimination of the Fourth of July celebration
- Annual Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP) membership dues of \$35,000
- Board discretion of HOM-TV funds relative to Comcast
- Need for definitive cost savings for each action listed under Other Cost Saving & Cost Avoidance Changes on page 4 of the budget message
- Options if the Central Fire Station did not close
- Loan of \$200,000 for the DDA to extend the Okemos Road Enhancement Project further north with streetlights and landscaping
- Impact of DDA borrowing on the Township's credit rating
- Preference for the Township Board to approve the overall DDA budget in addition to the DDA Board
- Request for written answer if the Township Board is required by state law to approve the DDA budget
- Explanation for increase in DDA personnel costs
- Expansion of the Art Walk celebration through local business donations
- Suggestion for a test vote by the current Board on the Okemos Road Enhancement Project
- A number of changes will take considerable staff time to implement
- Reduction of bookkeeper position from Accounting and Budgeting Department
- All Department Directors are working directors
- Elimination of a network administrator position from the Information Technology Department
- Difficulty in quantifying negative consequences of position eliminations
- No major IT projects scheduled in 2010
- Elimination of a Records Clerk II position from the Clerk's Office
- Reconfiguration of some receptionist's duties to other support personnel
- Support personnel to work in various departments at busy times
- Elimination of a Transfer Station Attendant position due to closing the Transfer Station
- Option to keep recycling component at the Transfer Station
- Possibility of moving the recycling component to the Meridian Service Center
- Inquiry from Wal-Mart representatives regarding the recycling component of the Wal-Mart lawsuit settlement
- Possibility of an alternative site for yard waste collection
- Elimination of the Custodial Position from the Public Works Department and expand custodial services which are currently outsourced
- Elimination of the vacant Director of Assessing position and outsource Level 4 assessing work
- Vacancy of an assessing clerical position for part of the year
- Elimination of the vacant Senior Planner Position in the Department of Community Planning and Development
- Possible elimination of additional planner position(s) due to decline in construction projects
- Elimination of the Fire Marshal position through expected retirement and rehire incumbent as a part-time Administrative Assistant with no benefits
- Reduction of a vehicle assigned to the Fire Marshal
- Keep vacant a firefighter/EMS Position for part of the year through expected retirement
- Vacant Firefighter/EMS position unfilled for approximately a year
- Furlough days a useful tool for temporary downturns in the economy
- Furlough days not an acceptable alternative as not all personnel would be affected
- Township labor agreements do not address furlough days
- Across-the-board cut in salary would be difficult as the Township has eight (8) labor unions
- Disparity within departments where positions are unfilled through retirement

- Unfilled Police Sergeant Position was the training sergeant
- Police training currently performed by the Assistant Chief
- Reduction in Police Records Clerk position due to advancement in technology which eliminates the need for information to be manually entered a second time
- Hire a full-time township attorney for general Township work in lieu of contracting for legal services
- Board interview of prospective in-house township attorney
- Development of a job description for an in-house township attorney
- Request for township attorney applicants to have municipal law experience
- Cost savings by employing an in-house attorney does not take support personnel into consideration
- Hiring an in-house attorney who is associated with a law firm
- In-house attorney would handle all aspects except labor law and uniform traffic code issues
- Request for estimated costs associated with an in-house attorney
- Purpose of a motor pool is to run an internal service organization where an equipment rental fee is charged to departments to maintain steady costs across the departments
- Sharing of vehicles among departments to get the most use
- Many vehicles in the fleet are particular to a specific department use
- Approximately 20% to 25% of vehicles in the fleet can be shared among departments

[Supervisor McGillicuddy recessed the meeting at 8:36 P.M.]

{Supervisor McGillicuddy reconvened the meeting at 8:47 P.M.}

Continued Board and staff discussion:

- Closing of the Central Fire Station and relocation of staff to the remaining stations
- Meridian Township advanced life support (ALS) service response time is significantly less than the national average
- Fire Chief estimated an overall cost savings of \$100,000 by closing the Central Fire Station
- Fire program does not always have personnel in the fire stations as the firefighting suppression division can be in other areas
- Opticom system in ambulances, fire trucks and administrative vehicles has the ability to turn a red light green
- Map showing response times in the central area of the Township under the new configuration will still be less than the national average
- Staffing of the remaining two fire stations to allow both ambulances in a station to respond to first and second call
- 3,000 EMS calls in 2008
- Township currently has four (4) large pieces of suppression equipment
- Selling the oldest pumper would "save" \$20,000 in equipment rental charges
- Request for itemization of the costs associated with the 4th of July Celebration
- Request for history of donations towards the 4th of July Celebration
- Elimination of the summer recreation programs at Towar and Central School neighborhoods
- Fee-for-service parks and recreation programs had a net expense to the general fund of approximately \$35,000 in 2008
- Pay off of the remaining debt on the Meridian Activity Center from fund balance saves a 2010 debt payment of \$51,000
- Permitting and inspection services for plumbing, electrical and mechanical installations would generate approximately \$35,000 in revenue
- Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP) organization is a regional approach to attracting and retaining jobs in the Tri-County area
- LEAP as a partnership between local governments, major employers and private industry
- LEAP has approximately 40 dues paying members
- LEAP was an attempt to pattern itself after other areas (e.g., Grand Rapids) which have been more successful in attracting and retaining jobs in Michigan
- Strengthen relationship between Michigan State University and the greater Lansing business area
- Request to ascertain if LEAP has created any jobs during its two year existence
- Tri-County Regional Planning Commission's government economic development group was folded into an "arm" of LEAP
- High degree of private sector involvement in LEAP

- Provision in HOM-TV's franchise agreement which requires a minimum of 80% in franchise fees to be spent on cable operations
- Elimination of department director travel outside of the State of Michigan beginning in 2008
- Education as an important component
- Alternatives for covering expenses in the event the Central Fire Station is kept open
- Fund balance monies an option the Board could use
- Possible option of paying off the Meridian Activity Center debt and then selling both that facility and the land on which the Central Fire Station is located
- Grant application pending for building a new fire station
- Recommendation to hold onto the property until there is a better picture of 2010-2011
- Board responsibility to find a viable alternative if one of the budget recommendations for elimination is not adopted
- Request to eliminate any costs associated with Policy Governance
- Suggestion for each Board member to go through the budget and offer line items where small cuts can be made
- Any reinstatement of proposed cuts must have corresponding reductions in other areas

7. PUBLIC REMARKS

Supervisor McGillicuddy opened Public Remarks.

Elizabeth Cox, PO Box 803, Okemos, spoke in opposition to closing the Transfer Station.

Cheryl Fritze, President, Riverwood Park Neighborhood Association, 2207 White Owl Way, Okemos, spoke in opposition to the Okemos Road Enhancement Project.

Brenda Brassington, 6132 Shoeman Road, Haslett, spoke in opposition to closing the Central Fire Station.

Sonny France, 4932 Grandview, Okemos, spoke in opposition to closing the Central Fire Station.

Ganesh Reddy, 3614 Ponderosa Drive, Okemos, requested the public have access to the real numbers in the budget. He spoke in opposition to the Okemos Road Enhancement Project and suggested the money be used for the July 4th Celebration. Mr. Reddy suggested cutting professional association memberships, travel, eliminating car allowances for executive staff and eliminating new Fire staff vehicles which would generate additional money. He spoke to streamlining all attorney services.

Supervisor McGillicuddy closed Public Remarks

8. FINAL BOARD COMMENT (None)

9. ADJOURNMENT

Supervisor McGillicuddy adjourned the meeting at 10:18 P.M.

SUSAN MCGILLICUDDY
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

MARY M. G. HELMBRECHT, CMC
TOWNSHIP CLERK

Sandra K. Otto, Secretary