

**BOROUGH OF ROCKY HILL  
COUNCIL MINUTES  
SPECIAL MEETING  
FEBRUARY 17, 2009**

The special meeting was called to order by Mayor Edward Zimmerman at 7:31 PM followed by the salute to the Flag.

**NOTICE OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT**

The following notice was read into the record by Mayor Zimmerman: This special meeting was called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Law. Notice of this meeting was transmitted to the Courier News and Somerset Spectator on February 4, 2009. In addition, copy of said notice was posted accordingly and filed in the Office of the Borough Clerk on aforementioned date. Notices on the bulletin boards have remained continuously posted.

**CALL OF THE ROLL**

Mr. James Banks-present, Ms. Linda Goldman-present, Mr. William Hallman-present, Ms. Julia Hasser-present, Mr. Mark Pausch-present, Ms. Courtney White-present.

Also in attendance: Borough Auditor Bob Morrison, CFO Ross Bobal.

**BUDGET WORKSHOP DISCUSSION**

Auditor Morrison advised that the the statutory date for the introduction of calendar year budgets has been extended to March 17, 2009. A draft budget modeled after last year's budget was distributed at the meeting by CFO Bobal along with revenue and expenditure reports from 2008.

Discussion ensued regarding the potential loss of State aid funds (approximately \$28,000.00) and the effect of same given the tax cap levy of 4% and the spending cap constraint of 2.5%. The 2008 budget number of \$431,488.00 (amount to be raised by taxation) along with the potential aid cut of \$28,000.00 and 4% property tax cap levy was evaluated. Auditor Morrison provided an overview on how the reserve for uncollected taxes is factored into the budget and how the surplus funds have been used over the years to include funds expended for the purchase of the fire truck and other high cost items. He further advised that there will be future budgetary ramifications by not raising taxes to the allowable 4% cap whereas by not increasing now, it will reduce the base number going forward. The surplus that has been used must be replenished in order to keep the Borough from encountering a spending cap problem. It was noted that taking the tax cap levy to the maximum would equate to a .02 local tax increase which would amount to \$40-50 per household for the year. Mayor Zimmerman related that prior administrations were reluctant in raising taxes, as he is, however, by not doing so the need for improvements to capital/infrastructure projects is now upon the Borough as well as implications with the spending cap. Council member Pausch offered that while it is reasonable to maintain the Borough's infrastructure, the hard economic times and additional tax burden to the residents needs to be considered.

An overview of the revenues portion of the budget was provided. The tax collection rate for 2008 is estimated at 98.6%. It was noted that the collection rate is lower than the previous year (99+%). Auditor Morrison related that the reserve for uncollected taxes has historically been calculated at a lower, more conservative percentage rate for budgeting purposes. Mayor Zimmerman noted that an increase in miscellaneous revenues, i.e. cell tower lease, nursery school rent, is anticipated which will help offset some of the loss in State aid. It was noted that there are surplus monies in the Water/Sewer fund account which can be transferred to the general operating account if needed.

The expenditures portion of the budget was discussed. Decreases and increases as applicable were discussed. It was the consensus that some of the following items/projects should be factored into the 2009 proposed budget: communications equipment, training for constables, Phase II sidewalk repair/replacement, resurfacing of the Borough parking lot, upgraded lock entry system for Borough Hall,

set aside for insurance deductible for lawsuit.

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It was suggested that a line item be inserted into the budget (outside of cap) for "Sidewalk and Facilities Maintenance" in the amount of \$36,000.00 which may be utilized for the sidewalk and parking lots projects. Other projects to be considered (and possibly through grant funding) would include (but not limited to): flag pole/lights at Panicaro Park, Borough Hall upgrades (doors/windows), solar pedestrian signs, painting of water tower, recreation equipment/programs at Panicaro Park, refurbishment of soccer fields behind Borough Hall. It was noted that the impending revaluation process may be funded as a special, emergency appropriation over a five year plan. Establishment of a salary in the amount of \$1,000.00 for the previously established Municipal Housing Liaison position (to be paid out of COAH funds) and \$3,000.00 for a planning board secretary position was recommended.

*(Five minute recess was taken at 9:45 PM.)*

The proposed school tax levy number will be provided to Auditor Morrison. Council requested a breakdown of what the cost would be for a 1-3% salary increase for employees. A list of employees and current salaries was also requested to be provided to Council. Recommendations and final numbers will be incorporated into a final budget proposal to be prepared by Auditor Morrison.

#### **OPEN TO PUBLIC**

Al Chini, resident and Constable, was present. Mr. Chini offered that the purchase of two-way radios would be beneficial for the Constables. This request, along with the purchase of flares and training, was factored into the proposed budget numbers.

#### **MOTION TO ADJOURN**

Motion was made by Hallman with a second by Banks to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 PM. All voted in favor of adjournment.

Respectfully submitted:

Donna M. Griffiths, RMC  
Borough Clerk