COLTS NECK TOWNSHIP
TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING
FEBRUARY 22, 2025
8:30 A.M., TOWN HALL

The Special Meeting of the Colts Neck Township Committee was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Mayor Buss followed by the Salute to the Flag. The following statement was read by Township Administrator, Kathleen Capristo: "The notice requirements of the New Jersey Public Meetings Law have been satisfied by noticing the Asbury Park Press and Two River Times on January 23, 2025 stating that a special meeting of the Colts Neck Township Committee would be held on February 22, 2025 at 8:30 a.m., Town Hall. A copy is on file in the office of the Township Clerk."

Roll call by Ms. Capristo indicated the following:

Present: Mayor Torchia Buss, Deputy Mayor Michael Viola, Committeeman Dan Buzzetta and Committeewoman Sue Fitzpatrick

Also Present: Kathleen Capristo, Administrator and John Antonides, Chief Financial Officer

Absent: Committeeman Frank Rizzuto

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1. REVIEW OF THE TOWNSHIP BUDGETS

Administrator Capristo opened the meeting welcoming the Governing Body, Department Heads and members of the public. Ms. Capristo thanked the Department Heads and their staff members and CFO John Antonides for their efforts on the 2025 municipal budget. Before beginning, Ms. Capristo addressed a question that has arisen as to why the members of the public are not provided with the budget documents being reviewed this morning. Ms. Capristo stated that the documents are considered "Confidential Working Documents" and as such they are not subject to disclosure under the Open Public Records Act. More importantly, Ms. Capristo added, the documents, are "Working Documents" and do not reflect the final municipal budget and as such to share them and risk having them copied or posted on social medial could seriously mislead members of the public as to the various budget appropriations. Ms. Capristo then reviewed the budget schedule advising that on March 26, 2025, the budget will be introduced and on April 30, 2025, it will be considered for adoption. Administrator Capristo advised the public that after the introduction, the introduced budget will be available for review by the public and once the budget has been finally adopted, it will be posted on the website and available in the Clerk's office. Ms. Capristo then reviewed the portion of the budget that would be focused on at this workshop noting that, for illustration purposes, in 2024 the draft budget was $18.2 million but only $1.4 million was allocated to the operating budget emphasizing that today's discussions will focus on what is basically a relatively small portion of the overall budget. Ms. Capristo added that in addition to the operating budgets the capital requests will also be presented and discussed.

The following budgets for 2025 were presented and discussed:

- Police Department (Chief Daniel DeVito)
- Fire Department (Chief John Sauter, Deputy Chief Michael Cusate, and Tyler Badaracco)
- First Aid Squad (President Martha Leonhardt)
- Recreation (Director Colby Marques)
- All other Departments (Kathleen Capristo and John Antonides)

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Mary Pahira, resident and Chairperson of the Historic Preservation Committee, provided additional details regarding the Historic Preservation Committee budget. Discussion ensued regarding potential grants and other ways to fund various projects related to the Montrose School House.

Ms. Melinda Martin, resident, opined that the obvious place to cut monies from the budget would be to deny the police department's request for additional officers. Ms. Martin further opined that expanding the Office of Emergency Management would not be a good use of the Township's dollars given that the Township could not possibly prepare for all the potential emergencies that could occur given our proximity to Navel Weapons Station Earle. Ms. Martin voiced concern that there has been no mention of expenditures on environmental issues.

Ms. Elaine Mann, resident, commented that the Township should reconsider the block building and the construction of a new building at Five Points Park given that the Township can't even take care of the plumbing in this building. Regarding the tankers for the Fire Department, Ms. Mann suggested the Township form a committee to pursue grants suggesting that in the past administration did not give the Fire Department information that they needed to make applications in a timely manner. Ms. Mann also opined that the Governing Body is taking a dangerous stance by not funding the fire department and are risking going to a paid fire department and first aid squad.

Ms. Melinda Martin, resident, opined that the township already largely relies on a paid First Aid Squad stating that she has had personal experience receiving services from a paid service.

Mayor Buss responded noting that there have been lots of discussions regarding the future of emergency services, given the decline in volunteerism, including looking to hybrid structures with paid day shifts.

Ms. Marianne Cucolo, resident, voiced concerns about the summer camp and whether the Township is properly insured. Ms. Cucolo also questioned the preparedness for ongoing maintenance and cleaning of restrooms should the Township build restrooms at Five Points Park.

3. DISCUSSION OF PUBLIC COMMENT

4. ADJOURN

At 12:43 p.m., Mayor Buss called for a motion to adjourn. On a motion by, Committeeman Viola, seconded by Committeeman Buzzetta and a majority voice vote, the meeting adjourned at 12:44 p.m.

Kathleen Capristo, RMC
Deputy Clerk

APPROVED: 03/12/25