

LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP BOARD MINUTES

Thursday, September 6, 2007

Time Called to Order: 7:02 P.M.

Time Adjourned: 7:50 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Healy
Christie Wilmoth
Emmajean Hines
Charles McMahan
Dino Batalis
Paul Rogers
Tony Widgery

TRUSTEE: Mike C. Hobbs

CHIEF OF STAFF: Loren Heger

Mr. Healy called the Lawrence Township Board meeting to order at 7:02 P.M. He stated that there was a quorum present and welcomed Tony Widgery, the newest board member from District #3, who is filling the vacancy caused by the resignation of Mike McQuillen.

I. PUBLIC HEARING ON THE 2008 LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP BUDGET.

Mr. Healy opened the public hearing to discuss the 2008 Lawrence Township budget. Mr. Heger presented the budget to the board and stated that in two weeks they will have another meeting to discuss, make changes, and adopt the budget. The purpose of this meeting was for the board members to listen to public comments regarding the 2008 Lawrence Township budget.

Mr. Healy stated that he just received the budget and asked for a motion to have public comment today and at the next meeting so that everyone can have time to be informed about the contents of the budget. Mr. Batalis made a motion to accept public comment today and the next time they meet. Ms. Wilmoth seconded. Motion agreed to 7-0.

Mr. Healy stated that the resolution passed in May authorizing the Trustee to seek an emergency loan in the amount of 1.8 million dollars was denied except for the amount of \$800,000. Mr. Heger stated that it has not been denied yet. He explained the process of getting an emergency loan. He stated they request the funds from the Department of Local Government Finance Board. The board makes a suggestion to the Commissioner and the Commissioner has the final decision.

They met with the Finance Board and the board recommended a million dollars less than what was budgeted in the 2007 Budget, which was adopted last year. Since then they have received a letter from Commissioner Cheryl Musgrave stating that she is not going to rule on our request until December 15.

As of right now, we will not find out anything until after the time comes that we actually need the funds. Not only are we not receiving the million dollars, but we will not find out about the \$800,000 until then. This is a major hit to our 2007 budget, and if we do not receive this money we are going to have to start laying off firefighters.

Mr. Healy asked what the board could do in the way of seeking the money. He suggested that the board members sign a petition and send it to Ms. Musgrave. Mr. Heger stated that property taxes have been an issue in the state and this county and the Finance Board is reluctant to do anything pertaining to property taxes at this time. Also, they did not give any specific reason why Lawrence Township in particular was not worthy of this emergency loan.

A discussion followed regarding the other townships and what happened with their emergency loans. Mr. Healy stated that they need to find out how serious the situation is countywide. He stated that he will contact Ms. Musgrave to see what can be done letting her know that public safety is their number one priority and that it is clearly at risk tonight.

Mr. Healy opened the discussion on the subject of the budget to members of the public who would like to make a comment. Mr. Ron Ryker stated that he would be willing to pass around a petition in the community that could be presented to the Commissioner. He stated that Lawrence Township Station 334 was purchased from the City of Lawrence. If the merger goes forward, Indianapolis would then hold property within the City of Lawrence. He stated that he would be willing to help in any way that he can. A discussion followed.

Mr. Phil Mullins asked what happened to the money that they had. He stated that he worked for the fire department for eight years and never heard they might have to lay off firefighters. Chief Blackwell stated that he has been in the fire service for 22 years and this rumor has circulated probably six or seven times because we were not able to get our emergency loan. This is not new to us, but it is more real today than it has ever been for Lawrence Township.

Chief Blackwell stated that after they hear from the Commissioner they are looking at asking the board to move funds around so they can get through the end of the year. He stated that they can borrow from the Rainy Day Fund or move money out of the Cumulative Building Fund. They need the board to approve the budget for 2008 and maybe increase the budget so they do not have to go back and borrow money from the Local Government Board of Finance. A discussion followed.

Mr. Batalis asked if the corporation was in a position to help. Mr. Heger stated that he did not know if they had the cash flow at this time to substantiate what we would need and if State Board of Accounts would allow us to borrow the money from them. He stated it is something worth looking into. Mr. Heger stated that they are looking at any possible way that we can avoid laying off firefighters. A discussion followed.

Ms. Wilmoth stated with the uncertainty of the emergency loan for this year it is going to be difficult to see how that is going to impact the 2008 budget. Mr. Heger stated that the 2008 budget has to be approved by September 30 or it automatically reverts back to the 2007 budget.

Mr. Healy stated that the next meeting to discuss the budget will be held on Tuesday, September 25, 2007, at 6:00 P.M.

Mr. Ryker asked what happened to the \$600,000 the Trustee saved the first part of this year. Chief Blackwell stated that we actually should have asked for 2.4 million dollars, but saving the \$600,000 gave us the amount of 1.8 million that we need to borrow.

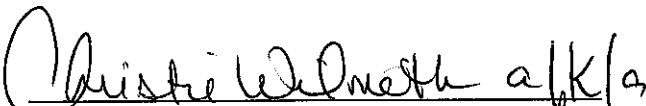
Mr. Healy asked three times for additional comments from the public. There being none the public hearing was closed. He stated that the public comments will continue on September 25 at the next scheduled board meeting. Mr. Heger suggested that the board members contact their local state representatives and state senators about the emergency loan.

Mr. Healy read a statement regarding the recent decision to cancel the consolidation meeting. Mr. Heger stated that they need to have a public hearing before they vote on consolidation. Mr. Healy stated that the public does not just want to speak, but they want to hear what the experts have to say on this issue. It was suggested having Trustee's from other townships attend the meeting. They will set a date for this meeting at the next meeting on September 25. A discussion followed.

Chief Blackwell stated that the board is going to do everything in their power to work with the Trustee and the Fire Chief to get the funds needed and not lay off civilians or firefighters from Lawrence Township Fire Department.

There being no other business to discuss Ms. Hines made a motion to adjourn. Mr. McMahan seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 P.M.

I hereby certify that the forgoing minutes are accurate and true to the best of my knowledge and have been approved by a majority of the Lawrence Township Board.


Christie Wilmoth, Board Secretary 