

**PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING
OCTOBER 10, 2011**

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The Plainfield Township Board of Supervisors held a Budget Workshop Meeting on Monday, October 10, 2011 at 7:00pm at the Municipal Building, 6292 Sullivan Trail, Nazareth, PA. 18064.

The following Supervisors were present: Glenn Borger, Vice-Chairman, Joseph Lerch and William Schmauder. Also present were Treasurer, Virginia Koehler, Police Chief, Dean Ceraul and Executive Secretary, Joyce Lambert.

Chairman, Michael Engler and Randy Heard arrived at 7:07pm.

Vice-Chairman, Joseph Lerch called the meeting to order and turned over the floor to Police Chief, Dean Ceraul.

Chief Ceraul indicated that he and Treasurer, Virginia Koehler had looked over the Police Department again and several changes were again made that lowered the police budget another \$26,200 from the original proposed budget.

Because the Board had concerns with the overtime for the police officers, Chief Ceraul had lowered the overtime in the budget from 100 hours per man to 75 hours per man. Other items in his budget had also been reduced.

Wendy Smith was present at tonight's meeting and commended the Plainfield Police Department for the outstanding job and service that they provide for our community.

Mrs. Smith informed the Board that she has been a resident of Plainfield Township for the past 24 years. She asked if the Board knew what is like to have a child with a disability who is unable to drive and has to depend on people she can trust you are not there. Or to live the nightmare of you husband dying in your home while you are at work and your child has to be the one to see his father unresponsive. What about your child standing along the road on the Sullivan Trail waiting for an ambulance to come back to her home in an attempt to save her father. Or can you feel what it must be like to deal with an attempted break-in to your home two weeks after burying your spouse. Well, she does.

By now it should be realized that the journey that she has been describing happened to her and her children. She just described the events that occurred in her home in a very short amount of time from May 1st to June 18th of this year.

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It was the Plainfield Township Police Department that brought comfort and protection to her home. Without these wonderful officers, she is not sure that they could even have begun to cope with these nightmares. They did more than the duties described by their position. They were trusted guardians, their stability and their hope.

She indicated that she is coming to the Board at a time when hard times have fallen on all of our country. These police officers serve and respect every one of us day in and day out. They protect each and every one of us (both our physical properties and our family members). Financial times are hard for all of us. She is now someone who has gone from two incomes to one and yet here I am asking the Board to reconsider their position on cutting any of these officers that protect and serve in the field.

Within their service and protection, they help us as citizens to maintain homes during our darkest days and when our lives become challenging. Election year is just around the corner for many of you. The pressure is on to furlough much of the police department.

Imagine if something happened in your home, your neighbors or your elderly parents and there is not enough officers protect each of you from a break-in, drug deal, domestic violence, car accidents or God forbid, a homicide.

Without these officers, we lose a great deal more than tax dollars. We lose the right to live without fear. Please reconsider the impact of eliminating any officers and give the people what we take for granted until that day when our lives change in an instant. They stand ready to serve us. In Plainfield Township they perform their duties with a passion and dedication.

Tim Rogers asked if there were any other places where the Board was looking to cut the budget.

Chairman, Michael Engler indicated that we are looking over the entire budget. Not necessarily just the police department. We are looking at any line item that is in the budget that could be cut.

Mr. Rogers then asked if that included the contract salaries for all of the employees in the township. Chairman Engler reported that all of the office employees and police officers are presumably taking a zero percent increase for 2012.

He was then asked if there were any contracts that would continue to get raises and was told that the Road Department is under contract and they would be getting an increase next year. That increase is 3%.

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Mr. Rogers asked why this couldn't be renegotiated. These are hard times and it would only be fair if everyone else were going to take a zero increase that it should be across the board.

Chairman, Michael Engler indicated that two years ago, we lost a full-time Road Department employee and we did not fill his position. At this time, he felt our Road Department is over worked and understaffed. While it is hard times, the four individuals that will get increases is minimal compared to making a large decrease anywhere. At this point he did not feel it was necessary to go back to them to renegotiate their contract.

Jane Mellert indicated that she has the 2011 Budget and the 2012 Budget and the 2011 Police Budget was \$1,125,899.00 and the 2012 Police Budget is 1,155,381.00. So, the police really aren't getting cut. There is still an increase overall.

Chairman Engler indicated that there is a \$26,000 increase in their Blue Cross, which would make up most of the difference. There will be no contributions for 2012 for the Medical Insurance.

One of the residents in the back of the audience indicated that she felt that the local police are critical to the municipality. She wasn't sure if anyone knew of the increase in crime in Stroudsburg with drugs. We are only 15 minutes from Stroudsburg. These people are coming in to our area and so are the drugs and crime. We need to stand behind our local law enforcement and you should not take away anything from the police department.

Millie Beahn questioned the officer at the Wind Gap Middle School and indicated that she had talked to the principal. He does a wonderful job, but she asked why the other municipalities or even the school district doesn't contribute to his wages.

Chairman Engler indicated that it is based on jurisdiction and Pen Argyl isn't in our jurisdiction in the school, whereas Plainfield Elementary School and Wind Gap Middle School are in our jurisdiction. That is why he only goes to Wind Gap Middle School and Plainfield Elementary and we don't ask for anything for him to go to the high school.

Marilyn Lieberman asked about the budget amounts for Clothing & Uniforms. The police dropped their budget from \$4,500 for 2011 to \$4,000 for 2012 then dropped it again for 2012 to \$3,500 for Clothing & Uniforms and the Road Department has a budget of \$4,400 for Clothing and Uniforms. Why do you need \$4,400 for the Road Department for their uniforms?

Ginny indicated that to date, the Road Department has spent \$3,540.19 for their uniforms. This is for the rental and cleaning of the Road Department Uniforms.

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Marilyn again noted that the Road Department only has 4 guys and their amount for uniforms is so much more than the Police Department. The police budget is for the purchase of uniforms. They have theirs dry cleaned and they pay for that themselves.

Marilyn asked why the Road Department needed to have uniforms. They could wear street clothes (jeans and a tee shirt) and boots.

Glenn Borger indicated that when you work with macadam, tar and oils, you can't the uniforms home and wash them in your washer.

Fire Chief, Greg Dawe noted that if you are working with herbicides, you couldn't take it home and wash it. It needs to be cleaned professionally.

Joe Hull indicated that he wants the Road Department because he feels that the infrastructure is more important than the police officers. He indicated that he knows the police are important, but no matter how many police officers you have, they are not going to be there to stop a crime. So, you don't need as many police officers as we currently have.

Chief Ceraul reported that last night a police officer was on duty and he was parked at the intersection of Sullivan Trail and Rt. #512. Somebody broke into J & R's Smokehouse and took a decent amount of cash, a laptop and several other items. They fled the restaurant and practically ran right into the police car.

So, it just so happens there was a police officer on duty and he did solve a crime. It does happen that the police are there to solve a crime when it happens.

Jane Mellert asked if Northampton County still has the Drug Task Force in place. Chief Ceraul indicated that they do, but 95% of the activity is in the south (East, Allentown and Bethlehem). They really don't come up this way very much.

A resident who lives by the Hope Church, in Plainfield Township, reported that in the last 25 years, any time she has needed a police officer, they have been there. One Christmas there was kids walking up the street and they were trying to break into cars and they caught them right away. There was a stolen car driven right into the field by their house.

You don't realize with the economy the way it is, where the realtors are going to look for the people who are coming into our area. They are going to the cities (New York) to look for buyers and renters. We had two drive-by shootings in Stroudsburg last year. It is going to come here and we are going to change. We are no longer a rural community.

A resident then asked if we are talking about laying off police, would that make Plainfield a part-time force.

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Chairman Engler thought that regardless, we would have 24/7 coverage. We just wouldn't have as many officers on each shift as you do now. So, if you have two police on one shift instead of three, and one officer is in West Bangor and one is in Belfast and something happens by Plainfield Church, you are either calling a guy in, which is going to cost you overtime or somebody is going to get away or somebody is going to stay hurt or whatever. The Chief will make do with what he has, but safety would be an issue.

A resident informed the Board that he had contacted Marsha Hahn's office, and Bill #1500 is going through the Senate. The bill would control payment of State Police coverage.

If you are a part-time existing police department services for the first year would cost \$17 per person per year. The second year, it goes up to \$34 per person per year and \$52 per person per year for the third year. If you disband the department, fully, and expect State Police services, it would cost \$156 per person per year. The population for Plainfield Township is 5,686. Therefore, it looks like the cost for Plainfield would be \$887,016 if you disband the police force.

So, it looks like you would be paying more than you are now and you would have less coverage. You would only see them if there is an emergency call. You will not see them in the area all the time.

Chief Ceraul indicated that right now we are paying about \$186 per resident.

Tracey Itterly asked if this bill would pass and you would eliminate the police force, would all of the township police programs be eliminated? She was told that they would be eliminated.

Tracey indicated that she totally supports our police force and the officer at the school.

Mrs. Smith told the Board that she had talked to her daughter that has a disability about the police being disbanded and she was very upset.

Jane Mellert asked where the residents were getting the information that the Board is cutting or disbanding the police force.

Chairman Engler indicated that there is a rumor going around about this. If our budget cannot cover the police (we are in negotiations), they understand that lay-offs are a possibility.

Raising the Tax Millage is always an option. It may be inevitable or it may not be.

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Tracey indicated that she didn't think that the Board could speak for the community and understand what the police mean to the people who live here. You don't know how the residents would feel about raising the taxes if it meant keeping the police coverage.

Chairman Engler indicated that as of right now, the Board has no intention of cutting officers. It was just a general comment that if we had to lay off officers, the part-timers would go first then the lowest tiered experienced full-time would be related to part-time, if that was what has to happen. The only way that has to happen is when Ginny says we have no money.

We are trying to make do with what we have by making cuts across the board.

A resident told the Board that they need to get more businesses in the area. Companies like Lowe's, Cracker Barrel and Sonic wanted to build on Rt.#512 and Sullivan Trail and the township drove them out.

Chairman Engler indicated that he didn't know about Cracker Barrel and Sonic but Lowe's and Wal-Mart have come and gone twice. The township did not put any more demands on the developers than what our standard ordinances call for. We are not driving business away. PennDOT and their requirements for road improvements are driving business away.

Glenn Borger informed the Board that he had a question on Joe's budget for the Road Department and the Highway Aid Budget. In 2008 funds were moved from the General Fund Expenditures to the Highway Aid Expenditures. The current amount for expenditures in the 2012 Highway Aid Budget that could be moved back to General Fund is \$139,100. If you did that, you would then have more money to pave the roads.

Ginny informed the Board that if this were what they want to do, they would then have to raise taxes to pay for these additional expenditures. This is just an option that she and Glenn had talked about.

Marilyn Lieberman indicated that there was a gravel road that only had a few homes on it that was done this year by the Road Department.

Joe reported that this was Berhel Road. There are 4 homes on this road and there were a lot of water run-off issues. The work that they did cost \$22,000 and it has resolved these issues.

Tim Rodger, 1139 Horizon Drive, told the Board that he lives in what is known as the Dotta Development. They have sinkholes in his area all of the time and all the Road Department does is come in and saw cut, fill and patch the area.

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Joe Lerch told Mr. Rodger that if he was having an issue with sinkholes, he should call him up and let him know and the Road Department would take care of it. He also noted that they may have an underground water line leaking and that might be what is causing the holes to keep coming back. Maybe the water company should be called to check this out.

Getting back to the budget, Jane Mellert indicated that she had asked years ago for the Board to figure out how many Mills it would take to run the township without the landfill, and this was never done.

Ginny asked the Board what she is supposed to do with Joe Lerch's wages for 2012. Because he is currently a working Supervisor, the Elected Auditors set his wages. Next year he will not be a Supervisor any more so his wages, which are not currently in the Road Department Contract, would no longer be set by the Auditors.

In the Road Department Contract, the Road Master gets \$1.25 an hour more than the highest paid Road Department Employee and Joe is already getting more than that would come out to. She needs to know what to do about his wages for the budget.

Chairman, Michael Engler felt that this should be left for personnel discussion during an Executive Session.

Tracey Itterly indicated that she could not believe that the Road Department isn't willing to take a wage freeze when everyone else is. Being down a Road Department Employee doesn't constitute giving the Road Department a pay raise.

Jane Mellert noted that a couple of years ago, she had asked the Board to form a Financial Committee. She felt that the Board should take that into consideration. She was also here when a 5-year Financial Plan was done and the Board needs to do that again. She knows it costs a lot of money to do a road and that needs to be looked at more in-depth. 24/7 Police Department coverage needs to be looked at again.

School is not open for three months. What does the School Resource Officer do during that time? Chief Ceraul informed everyone that in the summer, Officer Long rides the Recreation Trail and the developments on his bike. He also helps to cover shifts.

Jane felt that there is also an issue with maintenance and insurance of the vehicles. She felt that both the Road Department and the Police Department should look at what they absolutely need to run their departments.

Chief Ceraul indicated that he has at least two vehicles that will not make it through the year. When that happens he will only have 6 marked vehicles, the Dare car and 2 unmarked vehicles.

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Joe Hull questioned the \$80,000 in the budget for engineering fees and asked if this was for wages for the engineer. Chairman Engler indicated that this is for fees that are charged to the township for engineering pursuant to a Fee Schedule that is approved in January. He does not get paid a salary by the township.

Chief Ceraul indicated that over the past three years he has been buying used cars on E-Bay.

Glenn Borger reported that over the past year we have been doing everything that we can to keep costs low on the office side. We have gone out for bids for the insurance policies and the rates have been lowered. The Office Staff is turning out any unnecessary lights in the municipal building and re-using paper for faxes and tapes for the meetings.

A resident asked if the Zonings Officer was really needed full-time and if the permits he issues really pay for his services. Chairman Engler indicated that the permits used to pay his salary, but with the economy the way it currently is, that is no longer true.

The Board asked Ginny if she could have Bill Hildenbrant come in during the day to sit down with the Board to go over the pension information.

Mrs. Smith thanked the Board for all of the services that they provide to the residents of the township.

Having nothing further to discuss on the 2012 Budget, motion was made by Chairman, Michael Engler and seconded by Randy Heard to adjourn the meeting. Motion approved. Vote 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce A. Lambert, Executive Secretary
Plainfield Township
Board of Supervisors