

**HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING
VIA ZOOM VIDEO COMMUNICATIONS**

Monday, January 31, 2022 – 5:03 p.m.

PROPER STATEMENT OF NOTICE – Mayor Peters-Manning called the meeting to order stating that notice of the meeting had been posted on the municipal bulletin board and forwarded to the Hopewell Valley News, The Times, the Trentonian and the Hopewell Express (the official newspapers) on January 5, 2022, in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975.

ROLL CALL: Those answering the roll call of the Deputy Municipal Clerk:

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: David Chait, Kevin Kuchinski, Uma Purandare,
Michael Ruger, Mayor Courtney Peters-Manning

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Administrator/Public Works Director George Snyder, Deputy Municipal Clerk Katherine Fenton-Newman, CFO Julie Troutman, Community Development Director/Engineer James Hutzelmann

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG – Mayor Peters-Manning led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

2022 MUNICIPAL BUDGET DISCUSSION

Mayor Peters-Manning remarked that she, Deputy Mayor Ruger, Mr. Snyder and Mr. Hutzelmann visited Aunt Molly Road to get a sense of the problem with the unpaved portion of the road and to get a sense of a solution. She then turned the meeting over to Committee Member Kuchinski, the Finance liaison.

Committee Member Kuchinski explained that parts of Aunt Molly Road are paved while others are not and that some residents desire the remaining portions of it to be paved, while other residents do not. He explained that there are maintenance issues with the road after storms and that residents are concerned that if the road is paved all the way through, that it might become a cut-through road increasing traffic.

Mr. Snyder provided an overview of options for Aunt Molly Road which included:

- Leaving the road as-is and continuing to repair it.
- Leaving the road as-is requires quarterly repairs which includes cleaning ditches and repairing potholes.
- Monthly maintenance includes repairing potholes.
- An alternative option for the road could be limited drainage and chip seal.
- Another alternative option could be paving and complete drainage on the roadway.
- Another alternative would be to have a contractor come in to repair the road on a yearly basis.
- Aunt Molly Road is chip sealed at both ends, not paved.

Mr. Hutzelmann explained that Aunt Molly Road is paved, with chip seal, in two sections for the majority of the road with the exception of the middle, which is essentially gravel; it is not a true asphalt road; and that the area in question is not a large area. Mr. Hutzelmann offered the following:

- The lowest cost option would be to do nothing and continue with maintenance of the road.

- The road will require constant maintenance, especially with regard to drainage.
- Drainage improvements will significantly improve the water quality of the brook.
- Connecting the rest of the road with chip seal and adding basic drainage costs will be driven by requirements from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Committee Member Kuchinski interjected that the Township would not do an HMA road through a rural part of Hopewell Township, as it is inconsistent with what is done throughout Hopewell Township, and requested less costly solutions be considered. Mr. Hutzelmann replied that lower cost options would include chip sealing and differences would consist of any variations in the types of drainage the Township would decide to do. He recommended chip sealing the surface of the road due to the amount of erosion currently occurring on the road; that the road needs to be stabilized; and that chip seal is the lowest cost option to achieve stabilization.

Mayor Peters-Manning expressed her concern over spending a million dollars for chip sealing 2,600 linear feet to which Mr. Hutzelmann responded that the accuracy of the estimate was unclear due to the drainage requirements of the DEP. He recommended creating a concept design of a drainage system; having a preliminary meeting with the DEP regarding their requirements; and stated he believed that the Township would be subject to the major development rules for stormwater management, however, that would be decided by the DEP.

Committee Members discussed repairing the road as-is; introducing traffic calming measures that would also divert water flow; creating longer term drainage improvements; addressing resident's concerns; minimizing maintenance concerns and costs; suggested possibly creating a one-lane road; questioned what the DEP would require; and discussed a preliminary survey of the road.

PUBLIC SECTION

The following members of the public spoke during public comment:

Jon Edwards, a resident of Pennington Harbourton Road, advised that when he was Mayor many years ago, it was decided to leave Aunt Molly Road as was, in accordance with the desires of the majority of the residents who lived on the road; that the residents did not want the road to become a cut-through; that residents complained when the road was chip sealed; and advised the Committee to reach out to the residents before making any changes.

Committee Member Kuchinski suggested an information packet be sent to the residents of Aunt Molly Road. Mayor Peters-Manning explained that the Township has met with the residents of Aunt Molly Road and that their opinions have changed over the past 20 years. She then asked for residents of Aunt Molly Road to reach out to her if they desire more information.

The detailed public comment may be viewed at www.hopewelltp.org in the video library.

Committee Member Kuchinski announced that there is a principle that the Township does not want to incur new Capital costs in a given year relative to what we are paying down in the prior year. Ms. Troutman shared a spreadsheet revealing the 2021 Principal Pay-down Payments (Debt Service) broken down by category which were, General, Affordable Housing, Current Fund Total, Open Space, and 2021 Debt Pay-down.

Committee Member Kuchinski suggested that the goal would be to be at or less than \$5.16 million for the Capital budget; that priorities will need to be made with regard to the budget; that currently the net Capital requests are at \$7.6 million; that a 5% down payment would be required; reviewed the road program priorities; proposed removing the priority 2 and 3 roads; suggested authorizing the full chip seal DOT project and if bids came in lower, then authorizing the next prioritized section of roads; and proposed going item by item through the priority list and discussing them.

Ms. Troutman explained that repurposed money from prior years is missing from the spreadsheet data. The impact of higher costs due to supply chain issues were discussed as was cost of labor. Committee Member Kuchinski explained that anytime an item had a useful life of less than five years, that item was moved to the operating budget; that certain items in the Buildings and Grounds

budget were moved to later years; that the salt barn will be rebid in February to see if a better price could be received; that the lighting in the Court should be deferred to another year since Court is not being held in person due to COVID.

Mr. Snyder addressed solutions for the vehicle needs of multiple departments which were:

- To reimburse employees for the use of their own vehicles.
- To create a vehicle pool by utilizing an online Google spreadsheet schedule to reserve a time slot to utilize a vehicle.
- Purchase lower cost, used vehicles, possibly at public auction.

Committee Members discussed the possibility of a hybrid solution, utilizing a motor pool and employee vehicles; questioned if reimbursement of mileage would follow the IRS guidelines; and inquired as to the sentiment of employees utilizing their own vehicles. A discussion ensued regarding utilizing a hybrid of the solutions and not purchasing three new cars which do not incur a lot of mileage during the year.

Police vehicles were next to be reviewed. Committee Members questioned if insurance proceeds were collected from past claims to which Ms. Troutman responded that the proceeds have not been received for damages from Hurricane Ida. It was decided that one police vehicle should be offset by insurance proceeds.

Committee Members questioned why 28 mobile radios were marked at a tier 2 priority to which Ms. Troutman replied that she had marked them as such due to a prior budget meeting conversation. A discussion ensued regarding the useful life of portable and mobile radios, both of which have a 10-year useful life; however, Ms. Troutman explained that the portable radios do get more wear and tear than the mobile radios.

Ms. Troutman discussed moving the Police Department's Capital request for computers and desk tops into the Operating budget, in particular the MDT, which is the computer in the police car, that has approximately a 5-year lifespan. Additionally, Ms. Troutman suggested moving the radar units into the Operating budget.

Committee Members questioned if a State Grant would be provided to purchase a new Alcotest. Ms. Troutman responded that hopefully the Drunk Driving Enforcement Grant would be able to offset the cost.

The Historic Preservation Committee has requested to repoint the brickwork at the Whiskey House distillery in the Capital Budget. A discussion ensued regarding the actual amount needed for the restoration and the possibility of obtaining a grant for some of the carpentry work.

Committee Members reviewed the drainage project for Coventry Lane and questioned the possibility of recouping funds for the project to which Mr. Snyder indicated that there was a potential to regain funding from the residents. Committee Member Kuchinski advised that there was the possibility of regaining enough funds from the residents to completely cover the cost of the project.

Mr. Snyder explained that Rivera Drive was a drainage request from a resident who lives along the canal tow path; the water is running off the road and onto the property; and is requesting the Township correct the drainage and clean the ditch along the tow path. Committee Members questioned if this is creating a traffic hazard to which Mr. Snyder replied that it is creating flooding on the owner's property. Committee Members asked if this was a legal obligation to which Mr. Snyder replied that it was State property where it needs to be cleaned and could be a problem that needs to be addressed with the State. Committee Members discussed removing this item from the Capital budget until it could be determined where funding would emanate from.

A general pool of funding for drainage projects, traffic calming and guiderail replacement were discussed and the amount allotted for traffic calming measures was diminished by half.

An additional \$20,000 was allotted for planning and design at Woolsey Park. Discussion ensued regarding whether the money would be utilized for the band shell or other projects. Committee Member Kuchinski announced that progress was made in reducing the budget and Ms. Troutman added that the spreadsheet did not include any reappropriated funds which would help meet goals.

Committee Member Kuchinski proposed future budget meeting dates and times; stated that the ratable base is not known as of yet; made comments regarding one time investments to strengthen resiliency; and announced anticipated grants.

PUBLIC SECTION

The following member of the public spoke during public comment:

Jon Edwards, recommended bidding early on the road program due to rising oil prices; replacing computers every four years, not five years; urged the Committee not to allow Aunt Molly Road to become a cut through road; alleged that the School District is unaware of a demographic study regarding a PILOT program and that they want one done; and questioned if the Township was interested in helping the School District fund a demographic study.

The detailed public comment may be viewed at www.hopewelltp.org in the video library.

At 6:33 p.m., motion by Ruger, seconded by Kuchinski to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED

The detailed public meeting may be viewed at www.hopewelltp.org in the video library.

KATHERINE FENTON-NEWMAN
DEPUTY MUNICIPAL CLERK