

**DECEMBER 23, 2008 CAUCUS MEETING**  
**MINUTES**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE BOROUGH OF MT. EPHRAIM**

**MEETING CALL TO ORDER:**

Mayor Wolk called the meeting to order at 1:07 pm.

**SALUTE TO FLAG:**

All present pledged their allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

**ROLL CALL:**

	<b><u>PRESENT</u></b>	<b><u>ABSENT</u></b>
Commissioner Gilmore	___x___	_____
Commissioner Greenwald	___x___	_____
Mayor Wolk	___x___	_____

**OTHER OFFICIALS PRESENT:**

Chief Financial Officer – Dean Ciminera  
Borough Solicitors – Joe Marrazzo  
Borough Engineers – Joe Federici & Doug Aiken  
PW Supervisor – Ken Jones  
Zoning Officer – Chris Fitzgerald  
Police Chief – Ed Dobleman  
Fire Department Chief – Mario Scullan  
Richard Schwab - Consultant

**“OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS LAW” ANNOUNCEMENT:**

Mayor Wolk announced this Meeting has been advertised and notices posted in accordance with the “Open Public Meetings Act.”

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

None

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

None

**BUDGET DISCUSSIONS:**

Various Departments made presentations with respect to major needs anticipated for the coming budget year.

1. **Finance:** The Tax Collector reported that a replacement for the validating machine must be considered since the present machine is over 20 years old and having repairs made has been increasingly difficult in recent years. The type of machine now available would also increase efficiency in receipting payments. It was also reported that the printer which is used for running tax bills, checks, sewer bills, and various reports is in need of repair or possible replacement. The Collector also mentioned that a new tax map had to be completed to reflect new subdivisions and property consolidations. In other matters, it has become necessary to conduct a dog census which has not been done for several years. Because dog catcher fees have increased 20 percent, it is vital that fees from dog licenses cover these costs. The dog census should help in this effort. The Acting Clerk will look into the fees charged by surrounding towns. Mayor Wolk reminded everyone that he is hoping that the consultant can provide a plan that will share the services of a Registered Clerk and save budget funds.
2. **Fire Company:** Fire Chief Mario Scullan reported that 2 new fire hydrants will have to be added to the site of the new town houses at the lumberyard development. Because the town now pays a monthly fee to NJ American Water for the hydrants, this will add to that cost. The Fire Chief advised that 35 personal protective equipment sets will be needed to properly outfit the town firefighters. Many of the SCBA (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus) bottles, which expire in 2009, will need to be replaced. Every effort is being made to replace such equipment on a rotating basis, but Chief Scullan emphasized the emphasis must be on the safety of the firefighters. His proposal would increase the Fire Dept. budget line by 4%.
3. **MEPRI:** Brian Conte, who serves on the ambulance squad, noted that the ambulances have undergone a considerable number of repairs during the last year. The ambulances operate on a 24 hour basis and have averaged 45 calls per month in town, and a total of 90 calls per month overall. In an effort to make operations more economical, he proposed replacing only one box, which is the body of the ambulance, and having it rewired. This was recommended since the engine compartment is still operating adequately. The cost could be as little as \$50,000 vs. up to \$150,000 for a new ambulance. There was also considerable discussion of MEPRI providing service to Oaklyn. The Borough would coordinate with them if this makes financial sense.
4. **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:** Commissioner Gilmore reported that the Emergency Management Coordinator advised him that his request was for a \$2000 increase plus a small stipend for the Coordinator as many other towns provide. For initial budget purposes, the Finance Officer was directed to include an amount similar to what is paid to the Safety Coordinator. There was also discussion of moving the Emergency Management office to the Lambert Ave facility when it is renovated.

5. **Police:** The Police Chief indicated that he was attempting to have the entire fleet of police vehicles under warranty and hoped to accomplish this through a program of vehicle replacement and leasing. He advised that there was an increase in costs for cleaning uniforms as well as washing the police vehicles. The Chief also advised that an additional position for a new police officer starting no sooner than May was included in his budget request. With this proposal and covering all prior year liabilities, the Police department budget would increase by less than 4.5%.
  
6. **Public Works:** Public Works Supervisor Ken Jones informed the CFO that, for the purpose of defining line items in the budget, it would be more practical to combine several smaller line items and to enlarge the category of "Maintenance" to make the scope broader. He also reported that his department is working on a five year plan. He informed the Commissioners that he thought it would be possible for some of the necessary repaving work to be done by the Borough via an Interlocal Agreement with Bellmawr. Streets targeted for attention in the plan include portions of Cleveland, Pennsylvania, and Delaware Avenues. Work is also being considered for the intersection of James St. and Mt. Ephraim Ave, Idora Ave., and Roosevelt Ave. Market Street sewer repair work is being postponed to 2009 but is covered by Capital funds. The department will be working on prioritizing other work to be done in 2009 in the event that federal stimulus funds become available.

The Chief Financial Officer reminded those present that requisitions must be filled out prior to any purchases so that funds can be properly encumbered. Mayor Wolk reminded everyone that approval of any budget items would be contingent upon the level of State Aid made available for 2009. He noted that a shortfall in State revenue is expected to impact all municipalities, especially smaller ones.

## **DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS/DISCUSSIONS:**

### **Administration & Finance:**

The Chief Financial Officer advised that budget transfers would be presented for approval at the last Borough meeting of the year, which is scheduled for December 30<sup>th</sup>. He noted that the budget is extremely tight, but was hopeful that no emergency appropriation would be necessary.

The Mayor stated that a policy for Medical insurance dependent coverage and Opt-out rules was still under study and was not completed for consideration at this time.

The Acting Clerk reported that New Jersey American Water Company had agreed to send letters to assist the Borough in collecting delinquent payments on three water accounts previously serviced by the Borough, but not within the geographical limits of the

Borough. It was noted that the properties could not be included in the Mt. Ephraim Tax Sale for that reason. The Acting Clerk advised that there would be follow-up on this problem before the next caucus meeting. In other NJAWC matters, Richard Schwab pointed out that the company had filed with the Board of Public Utilities for rate increases in the distribution charge. He noted that some towns have joined together collectively to object to the rate increase and the Borough might want to consider this at some point.

The Acting Clerk & Richard Schwab met with COAH housing consultant, Bill Harris, to seek his services to complete the necessary reports due from 2007 and 2008 and to determine if it would be feasible to remain under COAH's jurisdiction. Richard Schwab reported that the December 31<sup>st</sup> deadline was not being extended by the State, but there is still much uncertainty due to legal challenges by a number of municipalities. He further reported that it would cost approximately \$500 to complete the necessary reports due at this time. He advised that to have a plan created to submit to COAH would cost a minimum of \$5000 for the planner. It may also be necessary to budget for additional funds to cover any legal costs, additional reports, etc.

The Library plans are still undergoing additional consideration to determine if greater attention will be given to upgrading the heating and air conditioning in the building at this time as opposed to upgrading the bathrooms. It was agreed to discuss the options with the Library Director noting that the work had to be covered by the grant amount with no further budget expenditures.

An update on the Paris Grant was given by Richard Schwab. He and the Acting Clerk attended an information and training session at the Ricoh branch in Marlton. Both will be attending additional training sessions once the equipment is received by the Borough and is set up to begin document imaging. This program is expected to provide a secure off-site location for the storage of information and will have several layers of security to protect data. Additional updates will be given as the program progresses.

The Acting Clerk reported that plans are now beginning for the 2010 federal census. A representative from the Census Bureau requested that the Borough provide a space where testing of potential part-time employees could take place. There was no objection to this request if it can be arranged. Individuals seeking such employment would have to take a basic skills test to ensure that they have the necessary qualifications. Local residents are welcome to apply for positions which range from about \$11.75 to \$18.00 per hour.

### **Police:**

Chief Dobleman reported that there was still no action on the security camera for the monument at Mary Bray School.

Chief Dobleman indicated that new ticket books were needed to correct coding on the tickets which does not properly distinguish between Oaklyn and Mt. Ephraim. Because

of this, it has been difficult to accurately separate proceeds from fines for each municipality.

The Chief also reported that the DOT was reviewing traffic patterns in the town. Under consideration is a plan to prohibit left turns from Buckingham Avenue onto the Pike.

The Chief and Richard Schwab reported that they are currently reviewing a proposal from the State, to pay our police through the Borough, for traffic work scheduled on the re-decking of the Route 168 overpass over Route 295. The agreement will establish pay rates for the work. After final review, a resolution authorizing said work will be presented at the December 30<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting.

### **Other Public Safety Items:**

Because several towing firms have expressed interest in bidding on the Borough towing contract for 2009, bid specs are being prepared and should be ready for the authorization of advertisement at the December 30<sup>th</sup> meeting. The specs will be available for review by any interested parties.

The Commissioners were advised that Shawn Huber, the Mt. Ephraim Municipal Prosecutor, has requested to be paid through the law firm of Brown and Connery rather than directly. The Solicitor will take the request under review for further action. If the action proves to be acceptable, Shawn Huber will be asked to submit a proposal to the Borough for specific language to be considered. Such language will then be reviewed by the Borough Solicitor before final language is presented for adoption by resolution.

### **Public Works:**

The Zoning Officer, Chris Fitzpatrick, reported that letters were to be sent out regarding car compliance permits to those currently in violation of Borough ordinances. He noted that there were increasing numbers of junk cars being stored on residential properties. Borough ordinances prohibit the storage of inoperable vehicles unless they are stored on paved surfaces and unless a permit has been issued for work or restoration of the vehicle for a period of up to six months. After discussion of potential amendments to the ordinance to deal with this, it was agreed to simply send violation notices and have the Zoning Officer document conditions and issue permits where appropriate under the existing ordinance.

The Zoning Officer reported that a bulldozer has been removed from the Bell Courts property area. He also advised that Mt. Ephraim Dodge was still not in compliance regarding the lighting on the two properties it owns on the west side of the Black Horse Pike. The Mayor and Solicitor are to follow up on this matter as well as a residential area lot being used for additional parking by the Milano Funeral Home.

### **Fire:**

It was reported that plans for the new fire house are progressing. The soil testing will need to be completed to determine if the oil tank has been properly removed and that there is no soil contamination. Borough Engineer Joe Federici is to follow up with Earth Engineering. Closing on the property will not take place until the absence of oil contamination is established.

**Engineer:**

In response to the State's request to return \$6,580.55 in unused funds from the \$112,000 awarded on the 2006 Green Avenue project, Mayor Wolk will send a letter to Joe Robert's Office in an effort to try to enable the Borough to apply those funds to the 2007 or 2008 projects which exceeded the State Aid Grants and for which the Borough has to expend local funds. He will report back regarding any response.

The Borough Engineer indicated that it is anticipated that the bid specs for the Generator for the Harding Avenue pump station will be prepared and a resolution presented for authorization to advertise for bids at the January 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. He submitted his proposal for design, bidding and inspection for project. A resolution will be on the next agenda to authorize it. Further, he submitted his proposal for design, bidding and inspection for Cedar Ave repaving project under the State Aid grant. A resolution will also be on the next agenda to authorize it.

The Engineer reported that the Planning Board subcommittee had one meeting on the redevelopment plan. He also informed those present that the road constructed by the developer leading to the Kingsway Station development near Eighth Avenue is not acceptable and is in need of major repair. He noted that the ground contained a lot of clay and that the base may be insufficient. Soil tests will be required before a repair plan is submitted by the developer.

The Engineer also reported that progress is being made to alleviate the sewer problems in the area of Linden Avenue. Ordinances will be introduced to enter into easements with three property owners so that the Borough can address the sewer line direction to minimize curvature in the lines, thereby improving the flow of sewage.

**Solicitor:**

Solicitor Joseph Marrazzo reported that the Borough has foreclosed its tax title lien on the property at 324 Davis Avenue. Procedural details regarding advertising and public sale will be forthcoming after review.

**Commissioners: Other Items**

A proposed agenda for the December 30<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting was presented for review.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION: None**

**COMMENTS BY OFFICIALS:**

The Mayor and Commissioners extended their wishes for a happy and safe holiday season for all.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

A motion was made by Commissioner Greenwald and seconded by Commissioner Gilmore to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie Darlington  
Acting Borough Clerk