

**Pennington Borough Council  
Special Meeting – March 16, 2010**

Mayor Persichilli called the Special Meeting of the Borough Council to order at 5:00 pm. Borough Clerk Betty Sterling called the roll with Council Members Chandler, Heinzl, Ogren, and Tucker in attendance. Mr. Lawver was absent.

Also present were Borough Administrator, Eugene Dunworth and Public Safety Director, Bill Meytrott.

Mayor Persichilli announced that notice of this meeting has been given to the Pennington Post, Hopewell Valley News, The Times of Trenton and The Trentonian and was posted on the bulletin board in Borough Hall according to the regulations of the Open Public Meetings Act.

**Flag Salute**

**Open to the Public – Agenda Items Only**

Mayor Persichilli read the following statement:

Meeting open to the public for comments on items on the agenda for which no public discussion is provided. In an effort to provide everyone interested an opportunity to address his or her comments to the Governing Body, a public comment time limit has been instituted for each speaker. **Please come forward and state your name and address for the record. Please limit comments to the Governing Body to a maximum of 5 minutes.**

There were no comments from the public.

**Council Discussion**

Mayor Persichilli explained that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss Interlocal Agreements with Hopewell Township. Mayor Persichilli stated that as a quick background, on November 30, 2009, a letter was sent to the Township Administrator stating that the Borough of Pennington would be willing to agree to a four percent increase over the 2009 contract agreements for Health and Dispatch Services. Mayor Persichilli stated that this was in response to a letter from the Township Administrator that included a breakdown of cost increases proposed by the Township for 2010. Mayor Persichilli stated that the cost increases included Animal Control at a 109 percent increase, Health Services at a 106 percent increase, Police Dispatch at a 58 percent increase and Recreation at a 509 percent increase. Mayor Persichilli stated that this amounts to an overall 98 percent increase across the board for these four services. Mayor Persichilli stated that the Borough's response was the letter stating that we would agree to a four percent increase. Mayor Persichilli stated that municipal budgets across the State are in crisis and even a four percent increase will be difficult in this year's budget.

Mayor Persichilli stated that the Borough has received a response from the Township stating that the committee met, reviewed the Borough's counter offer and the bottom line was that the Township was willing to reduce the amount of the increase that they identified by 50 percent for 2010. Mayor Persichilli explained that means that for Animal Control instead of a 109 percent increase it would be 54 percent, Health instead of 106 would be 53, Police Dispatch instead of 58 would be 29 and Recreation 254 percent. Mayor Persichilli stated that across the board that would average to around a 45 percent increase. Mayor Persichilli stated that he is not happy with the Township's letter and he called this meeting to get Council's thoughts on how to proceed. Mayor Persichilli stated that Hopewell Borough Administrator, Michelle Hovan has responded to the Townships letter and a copy of her response is available at Borough Hall.

Mayor Persichilli stated that the Mayor of Hopewell Township stated at a meeting which included both Mayor Persichilli and Mayor Anzano of Hopewell Borough that the Township was willing to agree to a four percent increase for 2010 and the Borough's response should reference that meeting. Mayor Persichilli stated that a week and half later, we received the letter stating that the Township Committee was not agreeable to a four percent increase.

Mayor Persichilli stated that before he responds to the letter, he would like to hear Council's comments on how to proceed with the letter.

Mayor Persichilli stated that he will begin by emphasizing Council's disappointment in the retraction of the agreed upon offer. Ms. Chandler stated that Recreation has been included as a shared service and it should not be because it is something that the Borough voluntarily does and we are not obligated to contribute any amount.

Ms. Heinzl stated that it was always the understanding with regard to Recreation that it would be self supporting. Ms. Chandler stated that when Judy Niederer took over she indicated that the program had become too big under the old leadership and she would be bringing the program back to what it was supposed to be and that she would be doing cost analysis so that events paid for themselves. Mayor Persichilli stated that the letter will indicate that the Borough will continue with the \$3,000 contribution to Recreation with the understanding that as the budget process moves forward, we reserve the right to discontinue the contribution.

Mr. Griffiths stated that Animal Control should not be included in this discussion because the year 2010 amount is included under the current contract.

Mr. Griffiths stated that with regard to Health Services we do not have any ready option to replace that service as it is today although we can hire a nuisance officer because 95 percent of the calls are nuisance calls and only about 5 percent of those actually end with a citation. Mr. Griffiths stated that mostly they are petty disputes between neighbors which could be resolved by someone in the Police Department not acting as a police officer at a low rate of pay with no benefits. Mr. Griffiths stated that he would ask the Township to rebid this agreement based on no nuisance calls and at a rate of \$85.00 per site inspection. Ms. Heinzel stated that the State Statute indicates that municipalities have to have a Health Department. Mr. Dunworth stated that a Health Officer is required, but not necessarily a Health Department.

Mayor Persichilli suggested that the letter indicate that we would like to continue this service on a month to month basis and that we are looking into other alternatives.

Mayor Persichilli asked for comments on Police Dispatch. Mr. Meytrott stated that he speaks to Chief Meyers of the Hopewell Township Police daily regarding different issues. Mr. Meytrott stated that Chief Meyer was very surprised at the amount of the increase for these services. Mr. Ogren stated that providing these services to the Borough does not cost the Township any more, they do not have to hire additional staff so allocating the costs based on population is ridiculous. Mr. Ogren stated that for some services the population basis might work, but not for this one. Mr. Meytrott stated that they have looked into alternatives and there is one on hold now that financially would probably be viable. Mr. Meytrott stated that there is no issue with the quality of services provided by Hopewell Township, but there is an issue with the amount of the increase. Mayor Persichilli stated that if the issue of Police Dispatch can not be worked out, the Borough will pursue the other alternative.

Mayor Persichilli stated that he will state in the letter that the Borough is willing to accept a four percent increase for these services and in the course of the letter indicate the concerns expressed by Council. Mayor Persichilli stated that if the Township is unwilling to agree to four percent then he will request some time to pursue alternatives.

Mayor Persichilli stated that he will work with Mr. Dunworth to draft a letter that he will forward to each Council Member prior to mailing to the Township to ensure that all concerns are addressed.

### **Closed Session**

Mayor Persichilli stated that items scheduled for Closed Session discussion will be addressed at the next regular Borough Council meeting.

At 5:18 pm, Council Member Tucker made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Council Member Chandler.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Sterling  
Borough Clerk