

The Work Session of the Washington Township Committee was called to order by Mayor Short at 7:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Comm. Popper, Harmon, Tobin, Walsh, Mayor Short, Attorney Jansen, Administrator/Clerk Gallets, Assistant Administrator Burd

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

Adequate notice of this meeting was sent to The Observer Tribune and The Morristown Daily Record on January 6, 2009 and was posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building on the same date. This meeting is being held at the Washington Township Municipal Building, 43 Schooley's Mountain Road, Long Valley, New Jersey. Notices of this meeting were sent as there were requests.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** - The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Mayor Short recognized the attendance of Paul LaCitra, representative for our District Legislators.**

### **PUBLIC PORTION**

**Mayor Short opened the meeting to the public. There being no comments or questions, Mayor Short closed the meeting to the public.**

### **ORDINANCE**

**TOWER ORDINANCE AMENDMENT** - The Township Committee will consider the introduction of a cell tower ordinance amendment after review and a recommendation by the Planning Board. It will be revisited in April.

**FIELD USAGE** – There was a lengthy discussion regarding the imposition of fees for field usage within the Township. It was mentioned that economic conditions are dire and the proposed fees are needed to maintain the fields.

### **PUBLIC PORTION**

**Mayor Short opened the meeting to the public.**

**Tom Forbes, 92 Kings Highway, President LV Junior Lacrosse Club**, expressed that he is aware that the Committee's job is not easy but the residents do not feel empowered. The sports groups should not be affected and he feels that the proposed fees are wrong as Junior Lacrosse is already running at a \$1,700 deficit.

**George Zutell, 64 Kim Lane, Football and Lacrosse**, stated that he believes that the proposed user fee is a tax and since everyone in the Township enjoys the fields, everyone should be paying to maintain them. He expects that the fees will rise each year and asserted that the sports programs should not be targeted.

**Bill Baran, 55 Winay Terrace, Vice President LV Baseball Club**, said that the sports programs start their budget process in August/September the year before. The proposed field usage fee was not included in their fees at sign up, and he indicated that the sports clubs would not know how to get these additional funds from participating families.

**Robert Hollander?, Long Valley Rugby**, expressed concern that, as a small club, they would not be able to afford the usage fee.

**John Cullen, 7 Shadetree Place**, has six children participating in various sports programs. He expressed that he feels our sports arenas are beautifully maintained within a small budget, with the aid of the sports clubs. He feels that it is too late in the season to put this fee into place. He is not against a fee in the future provided it is dedicated to improve the infrastructure and not put towards maintenance.

**John Bevel, 47 Long Hill Road**, was a past soccer coach and board member. He feels that the usage fee would be a hardship on the participating families.

**Chris Lindquist, 6 Middlesworth Farm Road, Long Valley Raiders Cheerleaders and United Soccer Secretary**, inquired as to the fee structure. **Mayor Short** stated that the fee is \$10 per child per sport per season. She feels that it will be a hardship on many families.

**Neil Scanlon, 18 Middlesworth Farm Road, Long Valley Girls Softball Association President**, stated that our fields are magnificent, but that with the taxes we pay, he expects such maintenance. He stated that they have already

had registration and do not have the additional funds needed for the usage fees. He expressed a willingness to accept taller grass and a little less maintenance.

**Andrea Katz, 29 Hickory Lane, Long Valley Cheerleading**, stated that they have already cut expenses in their budget to remain affordable while maintaining a safe environment for their girls. The proposed field usage fees will undermine everything they have done thus far.

**Walter Cullen, 9 Laurel Drive**, stated that as a Long Valley resident, he feels that the expense should be spread across the entire tax base without sacrificing the Public Works budget. He inquired how fee payments would be monitored and enforced? A family with multiple children in multiple sports would be unfairly charged. These groups provide an important service to the town. Mr. Cullen inquired whether the fee funds would ever be used for anything else. The Committee explained that it would be a dedicated fund in perpetuity. Mr. Cullen also inquired how the \$10 number was derived. He commented that the economy is affecting everyone. Mr. Cullen inquired whether state mandated funds are outside the 4% cap. If they are not, he feels that we should lobby our legislators at the county and state level to have anything mandated be outside the cap.

**Scott Miller, 14 Clearview Drive, Long Valley Soccer Vice President and Acting Treasurer**, inquired whether the fees will be placed in a dedicated fund and what happens to those funds if they are not used. He also inquired what will be done to those organizations that will not be able to afford the fees?

**Eric Saeur, 56 Anne Road**, stated that as a former league official, he feels that the sports organizations are being targeted. The volunteer hours alone make these organizations very valuable to the Town.

**Michael DeLacruz, 183 Old Turnpike Road, Long Valley Raiders President**, suggested that a fund raiser be held so that usages fees would not be necessary.

**Mary Mc Ardle, 156 Old Turnpike Road**, inquired about charges for such groups as the MVCA. **Mayor Short** explained that they are already being charged. She inquired as to how much is being collected and suggested that the Township look to those groups for more funding.

**Christ Lindquist** commented that the monies collected from such groups as the MVCA are disproportionate to the fees expected from the sports groups given the amount of time the fields are used.

**Matt Farley, 17 Quail Run**, said that as a father of three who are involved in sports, he is concerned about how everyone is going to meet this obligation. As to the previously mentioned mandated truck wash, he inquired whether we can share the facility with other Townships. **Comm. Walsh** stated that shared service opportunities are being researched. Mr. Farley inquired as to when the Fee Trust needs to be funded; why beforehand; who will manage it and oversee its performance? He also asked if the fee is a one time assessment; where do we cap it? He stated that we should be more creative in cutting costs.

**Walter Cullen**, a founder and former president of the MVCA, stated that it should be known that the pavilion that the MVCA uses for its activities was donated by the MVCA through an AT&T grant in the late 1990s. He further stated that the MVCA uses the pavilion and fields only part of the time as they have field trips and take the children swimming.

**Cameron Esemplare, 26 Squire Hill Road, a member of the Municipal Recreation Committee**, stated that she feels that the Committee is doing an excellent job under difficult circumstances. She was surprised that some of the previous comments were regarding the presentation of the fee at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the budget process of the sports groups, however, she is hearing a lot of suggestions for the Township budget at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour as well. She commented that the tax rate is very low and that the Township does a lot with very little. Ms. Esemplare would like to see the financial statements for the sports groups.

**Mayor Short** commented that out of 39 municipalities, Washington Township had the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest tax rate in the county. He further stated that our school was ranked the 7<sup>th</sup> highest in the county.

**Mayor Short** thanked the sports groups for all of their contributions to the fields, such as lighting and maintenance. Mayor Short asked the people of the Township whether they would be willing to accept a reduced level of maintenance at the fields.

**Eric Saeur** commented that he feels the fields are beautifully maintained, but that the sports organizations do wonderful things for the town. He further stated that we need to find money we can use for this purpose. He feels that the Committee should have the public come up with suggestions.

**Mayor Short** responded that he has been trying to get the public involved, however, out of six budget meetings on a \$16 million budget, only one person has attended.

**Chris Lindquist** stated that with the cheerleading meetings, they very rarely get public involvement.

One of the above speakers commented that he would like to know how a figure is arrived at to cut grass and that number should be reduced.

**Mayor Short** responded that the Township has laid off two employees involved in grass cutting. They have been using the larger mowers to accomplish more in less time.

One of the above speakers commented that he has never personally been invited to council meetings.

**Mayor Short** stated that personal invitations to all the residents is not feasible, however, he will read any e-mails sent to him as do other members of the Committee. The budget is still a work in progress. Mayor Short reiterated his question as to whether the public is willing to accept fields that are not as well groomed.

**Scott Frech, Department of Public Works Superintendent**, answered queries regarding field maintenance.

**There being no further comments or questions, Mayor Short closed the meeting to the public.**

**Comm. Popper** stated that hardships can be a problem and that no child should be left out. The Committee agreed that in hardship cases, the fees will be waived. Comm. Popper also agreed that some of the registrations have been completed, it is difficult to collect those fees. Comm. Popper suggested a grace period for those clubs. He further commented that the Trust Fund is dedicated to field maintenance and there is a fiduciary responsibility to use those funds for that purpose. Comm. Popper is concerned that doing less to the fields may cause a safety hazard, and in that case he is not in favor of reducing spending on field maintenance.

**Comm. Walsh** stated that the Committee is aware of public opinion; the Committee does not enjoy having to impose the field usage fee; and it is only out of necessity that it has been suggested. He further stated that the grace period should be extended to July 1, 2009 for those clubs which have already completed their registration.

**Comm. Tobin** stated that the Committee only gets 17 cents from every tax dollar, and the field usage fee is a necessity.

**Comm. Harmon** stated that we are all in this together as a community. He commented that if there is a belief that there is "fat" in the budget, there is not. There are many municipal jobs at stake, just to make the budget work within our financial constraints. Comm. Harmon has a hard time with the philosophy of the fee, but he does not see another alternative at this time. He suggested looking again at the commercial groups for more dollars.

**Mayor Short** answered previous questions, stating that it is difficult to monitor the use of the fields. He also commented that the sports groups do use non-municipal fields. **Comm. Walsh** stated that he will talk to some groups and take a look at that. Mayor Short continued that the Trust is under the supervision of our CFO. He would be surprised if it is not all used, but if it is not, the fee can be revisited.

## **PUBLIC PORTION**

**Mayor Short again opened the meeting to the public.**

**Sam Akin, 98 East Mill Road**, commented that Zion Lutheran Church's field is maintained by the Church. He inquired about the Golf Course. Are there fees dedicated to field maintenance in the budget.

**Mayor Short** updated the public on the status of the Black Oak Golf Course, stating that there are between 8 and 11 holes finished. It may be open for 9 hole play in the fall, however, they will not have a club house for a couple of years due to low membership at this time. It will be a big ratable for the Township when it becomes operational. Mayor Short also answered that the Township does devote \$64,000 to field maintenance in the budget.

Another resident stated that every department in town was asked to cut their budget by 5% and everyone complied.

**Mayor Short** responded that the operating budget was cut, not salary and wages. He further stated that the Recreation/Field Maintenance budget was cut by approximately \$3,700. The resident inquired why it was not another budget. Mayor Short stated that after all the meetings, it was decided that as a large tax drain, field maintenance is a service that needed to be cut. The \$10 fee seems to make the budget whole. It may need adjustment in the future.

**There being no further comments or questions, Mayor Short closed the meeting to the public.**

The Township Committee will consider the introduction of an ordinance entitled, "**AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF WASHINGTON, COUNTY OF MORRIS, AND STATE OF NEW JERSEY TO AMEND CHAPTER 137, PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS, OF THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF WASHINGTON**" at the March 16, 2009 Regular Meeting.

**Attorney Jansen** stated that the ordinance may need to be tweaked before the Monday meeting to incorporate the changes discussed at this meeting.

**Mayor Short declared a short recess at 8:38 P.M. The meeting resumed at 8:48 P.M.**

**DISCUSSION**

**OPEN SPACE** – **Comm. Walsh** stated that the Open Space Committee has moved into high gear and has assimilated many volunteers. He would like to nominate a new member at the Regular Meeting on Monday.

**OEM** – **Mayor Short** stated that he would like to appoint Roy DeLaSalle as Emergency Management Deputy Coordinator at the Regular Meeting on Monday.

**JOINT COMMITTEE** – **Mayor Short** spoke with the Chester's Mayor and they will be forming a Combe Fill South Joint Mitigation Committee for mitigation projects within the area. Mayor Short would like to serve on this committee and to appoint Cris Cooke-Gibbs, Municipal Health Officer.

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION – INTERVIEW** – Comm. Wash and Comm. Harmon will conduct an interview of Leah Morgan Korbel.

**RECREATION DONATION** – A recreation donation from the family of Gil Taylor will benefit Palmer Park.

**PUBLIC PORTION**

Mayor Short opened the meeting to the public. There being no further comments or questions, Mayor Short closed the meeting to the public.

The Township Committee went into Executive Session at 9:17 P.M.

**RESOLUTION #R-51-09 - EXECUTIVE SESSION – PENDING LITIGATION: SCHLACTER V.  
WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP;  
MURATA V. WASHINGTON  
TOWNSHIP  
CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS: SHARED SERVICES  
AND PASCALE  
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING: CWA**

Motion was made by Comm. Walsh, seconded by Comm. Popper that the foregoing resolution be adopted. Motion was carried by the following roll call vote:

**AYES:** Comm. Popper, Harmon, Tobin, Walsh, Mayor Short

**NAYS:** None

**ABSTENTIONS:** None

**ABSENT:** None

The Township Committee came out of Executive Session at 10:10 P.M.

The meeting adjourned at 10:11 P.M.

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Dianne S. Gallets, Clerk