

**BOROUGH OF WESTVILLE**  
**Special Council Meeting**  
**165 Broadway**  
**September 19, 2016 ~ 7:00 p.m.**  
*Meeting Minutes*

Mayor Welsh called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Clerk read the public notice and roll call was taken, with the following persons in attendance:

Mayor Russell W. Welsh, Jr., Council President Michael O. Ledrich, Council Members: Paul C. Mailley, Donna Moan, Charles D. Murtaugh, Bruce Nordaby, Fritz H. Sims, Jr., Municipal Clerk/Tax Collector Christine Helder, Administrator William J. Bittner, Jr., Public Works Superintendent Donna Domico, and Solicitor Timothy Scaffidi

Mayor Welsh prefaced the meeting by stating Remington & Vernick Engineers, Aqua New Jersey Water and NW Financial Group would all make a presentation on the possible sale of the Water Utilities and upon completion of all presentations, questions from the audience would be addressed.

**PRESENTATION BY STEPHANIE CUTHBERT OF REMINGTON & VERNICK ENGINEERS**

Ms. Cuthbert advised her company was hired by the Borough to evaluate the Water Utility System. Ms. Cuthbert stated the Engineering team's evaluation was based on the condition of the system, routine maintenance of the system and improvements that needed to be made. Ms. Cuthbert advised the presentation she was about to make was the same presentation made on May 19, 2016 and the same one that is posted to the Westville web site. She talked about the above and below grade infrastructure and the repairs needed, as well as the value of the Water system. Ms. Cuthbert also addressed the restrictions the Borough placed in the RFP, (rate freeze for five years, current employees be interviewed for jobs, how much money the company was bidding, how much the company would commit to repairs on the system). Ms. Cuthbert advised the restrictions in the RFP affected the price to purchase the system and without any restrictions the System was valued at 8.6 million dollars.

Administrator Bittner added another restriction that seniors will still continue to receive the Senior Citizen deduction for water.

Mayor Welsh explained the reason they asked Ms. Cuthbert to make her presentation was so she could provide details on the condition of the Water Utility and to help residents understand why the Borough is looking to explore opportunities specific to the Water Utility.

**PRESENTATION BY STEVE SPENCER OF AQUA NEW JERSEY WATER**

Mr. Spencer highlighted the benefits of this transaction to Westville, by stating residents will continue to receive a safe, reliable source of water and that Aqua will also invest 3.4 million dollars in the infrastructure system over the first five years and will continue to invest as the company moves forward with the Engineer's plan. Mr. Spencer confirmed residents will have rate stability for the first five years and any future rate increases would have to be approved by the Board of Public Utilities (BPU). Mr. Spencer also assured residents that the discount for seniors and disabled individuals will continue.

**PRESENTATION BY STEVE SPENCER OF AQUA NEW JERSEY WATER (Continued)**

Mr. Spencer informed residents that Aqua will provide excellent U.S. based customer service and pay the Borough 8.4 million dollars for the Water Utility. Mr. Spencer reminded residents the sale of the Utility will eliminate the need to take on the debt to repair and maintain the infrastructure going forward. Mr. Spencer talked about Aqua's investment in the community and towns they currently service, as well as the company's history and customer service. He advised residents that Aqua's customer service is available seven days a week/24 hours a day and they also have the capability to text, email, or phone residents in case of an emergency.

Mayor Welsh addressed the residents by stating that if the Borough goes through with the sale, they would be able to eliminate the current debt and based on information from the financial experts, they would be able to freeze the local purpose tax for nine years along with water rates. Mayor Welsh further stated if the Water Utility is not sold, Utility rates and local taxes would increase.

**PRESENTATION BY DOUG BACHER OF THE NW FINANCIAL GROUP, LLC.**

Mr. Bacher advised the Borough currently has about 2.1 million dollars in water debt, and that money would have to be put aside to pay the debt at the designated times. The remaining balance of 6.3 million could be available for the benefit of the Borough and residents.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

- ❖ Joyce Lovell, 328 Summit Avenue, discussed the value of the system as opposed to the selling price. Ms. Cuthbert responded by stating the selling price decreased because Mayor and Council requested the five year rate freeze on the water rates and the requirement that when replacing a main the road be repaired from curb to curb. Ms. Lovell asked about how Aqua bills their customers and was informed billing would change to a monthly process rather than quarterly.
  
- ❖ Marian Galbraith, 136 Walnut Street, expressed her concerns about the maintenance of the Water Tower and the process for shutting off water for non-payment. She asked what will happen to the money that would pay off the Borough's debt. Discussion took place regarding future financial plans for the Borough and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regulations for water quality. Mrs. Galbraith expressed her concern about Aqua selling Westville's water and Public Works Manager Domico assured her there is not enough water to sell because the Borough's allocation is 175 million and they pump 170 million.
  
- ❖ Fred Coleman, 120 West Avenue commented to Aqua that he called the number on the door hanger left at his house and no one called him back. Discussion also took place regarding water testing and the sources of water for Westville residents. Mr. Coleman also confirmed with Aqua representatives that their company is supplying water to Gloucester Township, Blackwood, Woolwich Township, Laurel Springs and portions of Mullica Hill and that Aqua is constantly refurbishing the infrastructures for the towns they service. Discussion took place regarding rates that are assessed to each town and how rate increases are reviewed and approved by the BPU.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** *(Continued)*

Further discussion took place regarding the cost of fire hydrants and the fact that the Borough will absorb those expenses. Mr. Coleman asked Aqua “what major improvements do you plan to make” and was informed “water mains”.

- ❖ Susan Opie, 628 River Drive, asked about the current charges per gallon and what that charge may be after the five year freeze. Public Works Manager Domico advised the Borough charges \$80.00 for the first 10,000 gallons and then the cost increases for every 1,000 gallons used. Discussion took place regarding Aqua’s monthly charges for water and repairs to water mains.
- ❖ A resident who did not identify herself but was known by the Clerk as Kate Burgo, of Delaware View asked questions ( she was in the back of the room and did not come up to the microphone, so the conversation was not audible). Discussion took place regarding individuals who may be hired by Aqua and possible job advancement for them.
- ❖ Stephanie Vernacchio, 22 Center Street, commented on the condition of the water.
- ❖ Stephanie Morris, 139 Twedell Avenue, advised her husband works for Aqua in Woolwich Township and stated Woolwich does not pay for the fire hydrants. She asked why the Borough would be picking up these expenses. Administrator Bittner advised the Fire District is its own Taxing District in Westville and had not anticipated paying the \$24,000 yearly hydrant fee and that in a few years down the road, the Fire District may have to absorb these expenses and possibly pass the cost along to taxpayers via taxes. Ms. Morris inquired about service fees after the five year freeze expires.
- ❖ Louanna Sills, 303 Edgewater Avenue, asked for clarification on the increase after five years and if increases could be spread out over a period of time. Aqua representatives assured Ms. Sills that all increase must be approved by the BPU and that they cannot randomly increase the fees.
- ❖ Joyce Lovell, 328 Summit Avenue, asked for clarification that Aqua would replace all inside meters and not just install outside readers. Public Works Manager Domico advised Aqua’s meters are not compatible with Westville’s current system so the meters would have to be changed. Ms. Lovell also received confirmation from Aqua that expenses are spread out among all their customers.
- ❖ Marian Galbraith, 136 Walnut Street, asked what happens if the residents do not approve the Sale of the Water Utility on the ballot at the general election. Administrator Bittner stated he felt Council would start bonding and making improvements to the water system for a cost of approximately ten (10) million dollars over the next 20 years, which will mean the water rates and taxes will increase 2% each year.

**PUBLIC COMMENT: (Continued)**

Public Works Manager Domico confirmed the Borough maintains the hydrants and Administrator Bittner advised Aqua charges for hydrants because if and when there is a fire, hundreds of hundreds of gallons of water can be used.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- ❖ **Municipal Clerk Helder read Resolution No. 105-2016 ~ AUTHORIZING EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS EMPLOYMENT MATTERS IN THE POLICE AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENTS**

A motion to approve Resolution No. 105-2016 was made by Council President Ledrich and seconded by Councilman Murtaugh. *The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.*

Before Council went into an Executive session, Administrator Bittner encouraged meeting attendees to talk with either him or the Mayor if they had any questions about the potential sale of the Water Utility. Mayor Welsh reminded attendees October 24, 2016 is another special meeting about the possible sale of the Water Utility.

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*Time In: 8:43 p.m.      Time Out: 9:01 p.m.*

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- ❖ **RESOLUTION NO. 106-2016 ~ APPOINTING JONATHAN L. COFFIN, AS A FULL TIME LABORER I, IN THE BOROUGH OF WESTVILLE, PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**  
A motion to approve Resolution No. 106-2016 was made by Council President Ledrich and seconded by Councilman Mailley. *The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.*
- ❖ **RESOLUTION NO. 107-2016 ~ APPOINTING SHANE J. RETTIG, AS A FULL TIME LABORER I, IN THE BOROUGH OF WESTVILLE, PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**  
A motion to approve Resolution No. 107-2016 was made by Councilman Nordaby and seconded by Councilwoman Moan. *The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.*
- ❖ **RESOLUTION NO. 108-2016 ~ APPOINTING JOSEPH E. CRAIG, AS A FULL TIME POLICE OFFICER, IN THE BOROUGH OF WESTVILLE, POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
A motion to approve Resolution No. 108-2016 was made by Councilman Murtaugh and seconded by Councilman Nordaby. *The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.*
- ❖ **RESIGNATION LETTER FROM OFFICER JOHN MASSING**  
A motion to accept the resignation letter from Officer Massing, with a termination date of October 1, 2016 was made by Councilman Murtaugh and seconded by Councilman Nordaby. *Motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.*

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- ❖ **Motion to approve a pay increase for the Borough's non-contractual employees, retroactive to the beginning of January, and to be included in the employee's September 30, 2016 paycheck was made by Council President Ledrich and seconded by Councilman Nordaby. *The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote with Councilmen Murtaugh and Sims recusing from the dais and the vote.***

**A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Councilman Mailley and seconded by Councilwoman Moan. *The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.***

*The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.*

*Respectively Submitted,*

*Christine A. Helder  
CMC/Municipal Clerk*

*Next scheduled Council Meeting held on Monday, October 10, 2016  
&  
October 24, 2016 (Special Meeting on Sale of Water)*