

**MINUTES
WOOLWICH TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
WORK SESSION MEETING
FEBRUARY 6, 2017**

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Mayor Schwager who made the following statement:

The February 6, 2017 work session meeting of the Woolwich Township Committee is being called to order. Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Roll Call: Battisti: PRESENT Carleton: PRESENT Schlump: PRESENT
Rizzi: PRESENT Schwager: PRESENT

Also present on the dais were Solicitor Mark Shoemaker, Director of Community Development Matt Blake and Administrator/Clerk Jane DiBella.

Those present saluted the American Flag.

Mayor Schwager administered a Ceremonial Oath of Office to Police Lt. Peter Massing, Jr.

Lt. Massing thanked the Committee, his fellow officers, Chief Jaramillo, Captain Lewis and his family and friends for their support.

Chief Jaramillo noted that Lt. Massing brings many years of experience to the department and will do well to advance the future of Woolwich Township and its police department.

Upon the conclusion of the ceremony, Mayor Schwager read the following statement into the record:

“Before we begin the business portion of our meeting, I take this opportunity to offer my thoughts on an issue rightfully on all of our minds – School Funding and its effects on our children and taxes.

While Woolwich Township has prided itself in being at the forefront in the State as an advocate of fair school funding for many years, I can’t help but be re-energized by the passion and support shown by our residents over the past several weeks. I have read every single email sent to me, attended workshops, shared opinions with other elected officials, and performed my own research. I see the democratic process working when groups form to push for a result that they believe works for their community. Your emails rightly used terms like:

- Fair
- Immediate
- Dire
- Extremely Urgent

Every e-mail contained the same request which is to fully support SR-100 without delay. One very interesting paragraph in the email states the following [In a nutshell, Bill SR 100 seeks to ‘provide full funding’ to schools using the original “School Funding 24 Reform Act of 2008”_formula. Bill SR 100 will

take out provisions attached by legislation that was not originally intended Over a five-year period, all NJ schools will be funded at an equal level (100%) making this plan a viable, fair and equitable way to distribute funds. This was deemed constitutional in 2008...we will NOT wait another day without fighting for what is fair.]

Another e-mail contained the following phrase:

Our children's education is just as important as any other child's in this state and we should not be subject to this inequity any longer. (Which I as your Mayor and fellow taxpayer, wholeheartedly agree with)

After taking my time reading and re-reading SR100, it unfortunately actually does none of this. What SR-100 does, is creates a special committee within the Senate that states:

- This committee will conduct a study and “**make recommendations for revising [the Act] over a 5 year period, and bring fair and equitable funding to all school districts for enrollment growth over a multi-year period.**”
- The committee will “issue a report on its findings and recommendations to the Senate President. The report shall be accompanied by proposed legislation to implement the recommendations of the [committee].

It further states the focus of the analysis is to propose fair and equitable school funding amounts for each school district, with the addition of \$100 million in state school formula aid to increase funding for underfunded districts. Where is that money going to come from? *Our leadership, on both sides of the aisle, have robbed Peter to pay Paul so many times that Peter's pockets are all empty.* What other part of our future is there to mortgage? I deserve an answer to that question before I support any Bill that, on paper, requires more money.

So, as your Mayor, I started asking myself, why should we as a community support anything less than immediate full funding due Kingsway and Swedesboro-Woolwich schools? We as residents pay our school taxes on time every year. We expect the same from our State government – we deserve fair funding **NOW**.

The bottom-line is, Kingsway, according to the latest numbers, is behind by 11.8 million dollars in state aid and our local school is behind by over 6 million. Why would we send a message to the 122 elected officials who represent us under the golden dome in Trenton that we are willing to wait 5+ more years for our fair share when we should be demanding it all now?

I would venture to guess that most of the parents I received e-mails from, as well as many in the audience here tonight have a child or children currently attending Kingsway HS. Should we continue to merely settle for supporting SR-100? All of these children will be out of Kingsway before the school is fully funded.

Before this evening is over we as a committee will hold a discussion on what, if anything, we do as your local Government. I can assure you that I will be advocating for full and immediate funding for both our schools without delay.

I will now like to open the meeting up to the public.”

Motion was made by Committeeman Schlump and seconded by Committeeman Carleton to open the meeting to public comment. All were in favor.

Mayor Schwager asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak on a topic other than school funding.

Anatasious Kalfas of 863 Ashburn Way presented an overview of his completed Eagle Scout project of creating a gathering place at the Community Garden. He advised the Committee that a final report must be submitted to Boy Scouts of America which requires the Mayor's signature and a letter from the Clerk stating the township's satisfaction with the project.

The Committee expressed their appreciation to Mr. Kalfas for the wonderful project.

Motion was then made Deputy Mayor Rizzi to authorize the Mayor to sign the final report and to have the Administrator write a letter stating the township's satisfaction with the project. Committeeman Schlump seconded. All were in favor.

Jennifer Cavallaro Fromm of 16 Chestnut Hill Court, Swedesboro approached the Committee and noted that she appreciates the Committee taking the time to discuss the school funding issue. She presented the Committee with a time line of previous actions taken over the past number of years to obtain fair funding for the Swedesboro/Woolwich and Kingsway Districts.

Ms. Fromm noted that the Mayor previously endorsed a plan put forth last summer by Governor Christie, but asks that the Township back Senate President Sweeney's plan put forth in SR100 that was voted on and passed 33-0.

She added that she is disheartened that the Committee does not seem to be advocating for the township children through support of SR100. She said that Swedesboro and S. Harrison are on board, but the Township has had no voice to date. She said that this is an opportunity to effectuate the way our schools are funded, and offered that the bill provides 100% fairness and stability. Ms. Fromm further asked the Committee to understand that this is a non-partisan issue and asked the Committee to understand that the one person being an obstructionist is the Assembly Speaker.

Ms. Fromm then asked the Committee to state their plan and whether or not they will be joining forces on this issue.

Mayor Schwager responded that he is not yet sure. He questioned what Ms. Fromm is asking the Committee to do, saying that no-one does not support fair funding. He noted that in 2008, the state created a fair funding committee that created the funding reform act. He added that that act has since been broken, and steps have not been made to fix it. He added that all that he can speak to on SR100 is what is in writing. The Mayor noted that the Bill simply seeks to create a committee to hold hearings, take testimony and report back to the Senate President.

Mayor Schwager said that the Township will support fair funding for both schools, but may not offer that support by backing a bill that only seeks to create a committee. He added that SR100 does not state where an additional \$500 million will come from. He said that while the township may support the school and school boards, the Committee also needs to look towards the best interest of the taxpayer. In that regard, the bill does not show one cent in tax relief, no-one has answered the question about the \$500 million, nor how the schools will use the funds if relief is granted.

Mayor Schwager added that the schools are underfunded now and asked why the towns should have to wait five years for a committee to research the issue instead of providing funding now. He stated that on its face, SR100 says nothing. He added that it may have a lot of thought behind it, but written on paper, it's a three page document that creates a Committee with no teeth to create change.

Ms. Fromm replied that she would expect at a bare minimum, that the Township would come together and support the bill as intended, and that the township has the opportunity and an obligation to support it in some fashion.

Gina Marie Santore of 501 Lexington Mews wished to clarify the critical need of the districts. She asked the Mayor why he previously supported a plan put forth by the Governor that would have provided less support to the districts.

Mayor Schwager replied that the Governor's plan had good points, specifically in providing immediate relief to the taxpayers. He explained that the thoughts behind SR100 has no provisions to provide tax relief and that if fully funded, the additional money would go directly to the schools and it would be up to the Board of Education to reduce their tax levy if they so choose. He stated that there are times when the interest of the taxpayers may not align with the needs of the schools.

Ms. Santore asked the Mayor if he has changed his position since the Governor's bill was debunked. Mayor Schwager replied that we have all gotten smarter, and added that he does not 100% support the Governor's plan, but feels there was good in it.

Mia Randazzo of 152 Maple Hill Drive asked what percentage of calls and e-mails that the Mayor received on this issue asked him to follow another plan. The Mayor replied that all of the messages that he received were the same verbatim, asking for his support of SR100.

Michele Blair of 203 Hunters Run said that the plan put forth in SR100 is a five year plan that brings everyone to 100% of funding at the end of five years. She further explained the districts dire needs, but offered that Kingsway is one of the lowest spending districts in the state.

Mayor Schwager asked that people not lose sight that a lot of thought and discussions have taken place on this issue over the past few weeks, and that this is the first opportunity the Township Committee has had to discuss together. He added that a resolution from the Governing Body carries more weight than a quote from the Mayor. He added that he made it clear at fair funding meetings that he was gathering information to take back to the Committee.

Ms. Blair reiterated that the bi-partisan Senate has backed SR100. Mayor Schwager replied that what the bill intends vs. what is written in the bill is unclear.

Peter Civitarese of 110 Heatherton Road noted that he has been a resident for 18 years and knows that education is extremely important. He stated that no-one has the expectation that taxes will go down, but that the task is to obtain fair funding.

Albert Azzari of 397 Harrisonville Road said that he personally supports the Governor's previous plan where every child gets the same dollar amount. He said that he is tired of paying taxes that end up going

to other towns, and added that it is unfair for the Kingsway Superintendent to not guarantee that any additional aid will go towards tax relief.

Brendan Harkins of 126 Yorktown Rd. noted that times are dire and that the state cuts have created a mess. He said that there has to be a positive message to Trenton that we need help now, and pick a plan that is going to help us now. He added that he feels Senator Sweeney's plan is the most viable option to get that done. He asked if the Committee would be taking any action on this issue later in the meeting. Mayor Schwager answered that they may, and invited those to stay to hear the Committee's discussion.

Hearing no further public comment, motion was made by Deputy Mayor Rizzi and seconded by Committeeman Carleton to close the public portion. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Deputy Mayor Rizzi and seconded by Committeeman Carleton to approve a consent agenda for resolutions **R-2017-49 through R-2017-57.**

Roll Call: Battisti: YES, Carleton: YES, Schlump: YES, Rizzi: YES, Schwager: YES

Motion was made by Deputy Mayor Rizzi and seconded by Committeeman Battisti to approve the following resolutions:

R-2017-49 Resolution of the Township of Woolwich Making an Elevation Within the Woolwich Township Police Department

R-2017-50 A Resolution Commemorating and Congratulating the Gloucester, Salem and Cumberland Counties Municipal Joint Insurance Fund on 25 Years of Successful Operations

R-2017-51 Resolution Authorizing the Issuance of a Street Opening Permit to S. Jersey Gas-16 Colony Court

R-2017-52 Resolution Authorizing the Execution of Woolwich Township Farmland Preservation Program Conditional Option Agreement

R-2017-53 Resolution Approving Acquisition of Farmland Preservation Development Easements on Lands

R-2017-54 Resolution of the Woolwich Township Committee Adopting a Redevelopment Plan Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 Et Seq. Regarding Block 14, Lots 2 and 4 Known as the Nike Missile Site

R-2017-55 Resolution of the Woolwich Township Committee Adopting a Redevelopment Plan Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 Et Seq. Regarding Block 5, Lots 11.01 and 16 Known as the PMC Site

R-2017-56 Resolution Authorizing Release of Escrow-Moppert Auto Collision

R-2017-57 Resolution Authorizing the Tax Collector to Transfer or Refund Overpayment of Taxes

All were in favor.

The Administrator/Clerk presented her report as self explanatory. There were no questions.

The Committee then conducted a discussion regarding the Fair Funding issue.

Committeeman Schlump discussed his concerns with any additional funding being used by the schools as opposed to tax relief, and that the funds will be spent at the discretion of the districts.

Committeeman Carleton thanked those present for their attendance. He stated that he shares the concerns brought forth and shares in the passion about the issue. He stated that he fully supports the fair funding initiative; however, he agrees with the Mayor that any funding should be given immediately. He added that the schools that have received over 100% of funding have not been concerned with the districts that have been getting less than 50%. He stated that SR100 may have noble intentions, but that he shares the Mayor's concern that the bill is vague in general.

Committeeman Battisti then stated that he loves the passion being portrayed on this important issue. He said that he hears both sides, adding that SR100 does not say that we are going to get funding tomorrow, but rather that the state will be reviewing it and deciding how best to proceed. He noted that at the end of the day, everyone wants the same thing; fair funding.

Committeeman Battisti noted that he has researched the issue, and that Wenonah received 285% and Logan 179%, and said that we can't put all of our eggs in one basket. He added that there may be other avenues to pursue in this regard, but one thing is clear; that we need to get the money back in Woolwich and do what we can to get it back. He asked those present to give the Committee a chance to discuss and come up with a plan.

Deputy Mayor Rizzi stated that all district board members do a great job in doing a lot with very little. He added that those who spoke presented much information and passion about the issue, but said that the Committee is in a situation where they have to protect the residents of Woolwich. He noted that he understands the concerns of the districts that will lose funding, but that our districts have been shortchanged for years. He advised that he feels the Township has to send a message to Trenton that they need to be doing something right now and that our fight should be for fair funding now.

Mayor Schwager stated that what is being heard is that the township fully supports the efforts of both districts in their fight for fair funding. He added that they will do so by passing a resolution at the next meeting, but that the resolution will request that the schools be funded now, and is not OK with waiting five years. He also noted that Committeeman Carleton and Committeeman Battisti as school liaisons from the Committee have been tasked with following the issue closely and being voices in Trenton.

Committeeman Battisti then added that there is a letter written by Ms. Fromm on the Kingsway website that breaks down the issue and offers a simple suggestion-that if everyone is funded at the average of 85%, that would be a fair thing to do.

Mayor Schwager then said that there is nothing stopping the state from adopting a budget that funds the schools fairly.

Motion was made by Deputy Mayor Rizzi to authorize the Solicitor to craft a resolution for the next meeting that recaps the desire of the Committee to fight for fair funding. Committeeman Schlump seconded.

Roll Call: Battisti: YES, Carleton: YES, Schlump: YES, Rizzi: YES, Schwager: YES

There was no old business.

Under new business, Mr. Blake advised of a quote received from Fralinger Engineering in the amount of \$14,500 to conduct a survey of Block 41, Lots 7.01-7.23Q. It was suggested that additional quotes be sought to ensure a good return for the taxpayer. Mr. Blake will seek additional quotes and bring this back to the next meeting.

The Committee also reviewed and discussed three proposals for remediation of Block 5, Lot 3 noting that GEI lowered their original quote and remained the lowest quote of the three received.

Motion was then made by Deputy Mayor Rizzi and seconded by Committeeman Carleton to approve the quote of GEI in the amount of \$13,195.00 to conduct remedial environmental activities on Block 5, lot 3. All were in favor.

The Clerk requested the Committee's authorization to place public bidding for concession stand service at Locke Avenue Park. Deputy Mayor Rizzi so moved. Committeeman Schlump seconded. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Committeeman Carleton and seconded by Committeeman Schlump to approve the bills and purchase orders provided by the finance office pending the Mayor's final approval. All were in favor.

With no further business, motion was made by Deputy Mayor Rizzi and seconded by Committeeman Carleton to adjourn the meeting. All were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane DiBella
Administrator/Clerk

Minutes not verbatim
Audio recording on file