

City of Lambertville
SPECIAL JOINT SESSION MEETING
WITH EAST AMWELL AND WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIPS
MONDAY, 7:00 P.M., JANUARY 25, 2010
EAST AMWELL MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 1070 ROUTE 202/31, RINGOES
AGENDA

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mayor DelVecchio with a statement of compliance with the Open Public Meeting Act.

ROLL CALL.

Mrs. Ege called the roll as follows:

Present: Councilman Sanders, Councilwoman Warner, Council President Stegman, Mayor DelVecchio.

Absent: Councilwoman Asaro.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Kneski of East Amwell Township led the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Resolutions to approve the bills list.

Mayor DelVecchio advised the public that the City of Lambertville had one act of business to conduct prior to the presentation by Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce. Mayor DelVecchio asked for a motion to approve the bills on the bills list. Council President Stegman made a motion to approve the bills on the bills list. Councilman Sanders seconded the motion. A unanimous roll call vote was taken in favor of the motion by all members present. MOTION CARRIED.

Presentation by Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce regarding the Shared Services Study on the Police Department.

Michael Capabianco of Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce explained to the public that early in 2007 the Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce was working with municipalities to review current expenses and investigate what areas they could share services. They explored several areas, including Tax Assessor and the Court and decided to apply for a SHARE grant to complete a police study. The goal was to find ways to stabilize tax dollars. They needed to learn how things operate and consider future financial pitfalls. Every function of government was looked at. The police department is the largest portion of the budget and the cost ranges from 33-55% of a municipalities budget. The biggest driver was Governor Corzine's change with the taxing permitted by Municipalities. The following Municipalities were asked to join the study: City of Lambertville (Mayor DelVecchio), East Amwell (2007- Mayor Tatsch), West Amwell (2007 - Mayor Corboy), Delaware Township and Stockton. The following opted to not participate: Delaware Township and Stockton. A request for proposals was sent out and Ted Ehrenburg of Blue Shield was awarded the contract. This was a study which was totally funded by a SHARE grant received from the State of New Jersey in the amount of \$38,975. Mr. Capabianco informed the public that the police study was available on the Website of Hunterdon County for viewing. He also encouraged the public to send him an email and he would address their questions. Mr. Capabianco explained that this is the first of many meetings to discuss the policy study and identify where we go from here. Mr. Ted Ehrenburg of Blue Shield was introduced by Michael Capabianco.

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Ted Ehrenburg of Blue Shield thanked the public for having him down here. He stated that he was impressed by the number of people who came out on such a cold evening. He commented on his understanding of the emotion in the room and informed the public that he was a police officer for 28 years and is now a Town Administrator. Mr. Ehrenburg commended the three municipalities who participated in the study and stated that they had a vision for 2011 and 2012. He feels 2010 will be the toughest Municipal Season and expects State Aid to be at 0%. He explained to the members present the way the study was completed, and where we are right now. His comments included the following statements:

- There will be no real initial savings
- West Amwell has 6 police officers
- Lambertville has 9 police officers and a Police Director
- They currently provide mutual aid to each other and surrounding municipalities
- His recommendation was that Lambertville and West Amwell join and operate for a period of 1 year prior to bringing on another municipality
- Lambertville is 1.1 Square Mile
- East Amwell is 28 miles
- West Amwell is 23.5 miles
- It is his opinion that as finances become harder, the state police may not be able to provide the services to communities.
- West Amwell has several police officers nearing the years of service enabling them to retire

PUBLIC COMMENT.

East Amwell residents and West Amwell residents expressed their concern over sharing police departments.

Mayor Kneski of East Amwell and Council person Tatsch, the former Mayor, explained to the public that they participated in the study as they believed they were going to be charged a fee for coverage by the State Police. They had no intension of sharing services unless the State of New Jersey decided to charge a fee. At that point they would decide what would be most advantageous for the residents of East Amwell.

West Amwell residents expressed concern and felt that the City of Lambertville would benefit from sharing police services more than West Amwell. They asked if Mr. Ehrenburg investigated the number of times West Amwell was called to Lambertville. Mr. Ehrenburg stated the data was not available.

Elise Ennis of West Amwell, a former employee of Dispatch of Hunterdon County and the Secretary for Flemington Police Department state the data was available if Mr. Ehrenburg made the correct request. She further stated that Flemington is a 12 man department and they still cannot provide full coverage with more than 1 officer at a time working a shift. She stated there

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were many errors in the report, such as the recording of state and county roads that run through West Amwell.

One West Amwell resident, Timothy Lelie, a former police officer of the City of Lambertville and West Amwell Township commented they he believed the joining of the police forces made good sense. He stated that recently a neighbor's house caught fire and it would be beneficial to West Amwell to have the man power to assist with an arson investigation and in the gathering of evidence.

Lambertville resident Daniel Marley, a former State Trooper for the State of New Jersey stationed at the Kingwood Office questioned the request made by Mr. Ehrenburg for information from the State Police. He stated that the request was never made while he was employed by the State Police.

Comments continued and included questions from East Amwell residents regarding the need for the police study and for shared services.

West Amwell Mayor, Tom Molnar commented that he was not in favor of shared services with Lambertville. Recently elected committee person Raymond Fisher commented that he was interested in the information gathered and felt the committee should listen to the information. Mr. Fisher's wife commented that she was initially in favor of the police study and felt more information needed to be investigated.

ADJOURNMENT.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m. with a motion by Mayor DeVecchio to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilman Sanders. A unanimous voice vote was taken in favor of the motion to adjourn by all members present. MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia L. Ege

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Acting City Clerk

**ADOPTED BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL AT THEIR REGULARLY SCHEDULED
MEETING OF FEBRUARY 16, 2010.**