

**MOUNT POCONO BOROUGH COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2016
6:45 P.M.**

President K. Davis opened the Public Hearing at 6:45 P.M. with the following members present: Vice President J. Woehrle, Councilmembers: F. O'Boyle; D. Casole; M. Oser and C. Williams. Mayor F. Courtright and Borough Secretary/ Treasurer L. Noonan were also present.

Councilmember K. Transue and Solicitor J. Fareri were absent.

PURPOSE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Proposed 2017 Budget which includes a 3 mill Dedicated Street Improvement Tax.

BOROUGH COUNCIL COMMENTS

President K. Davis stated the Budget & Finance committee met five (5) times and the Borough Council met four (4) evenings to produce the budget that is being considered this evening. At one time, there was a revenue deficit of over \$470,000 to balance this budget, which roughly equates to an 11 mill increase. No one on Borough Council wanted to raise taxes, the Budget & Finance Committee met again and reviewed the budget line item by line item and reduced the revenue deficit to approximately \$120,000.

Council discussed various options to balance the budget. Consideration was given to reduce the amount of money budgeted for road rehabilitation, which has been the "go to" budget line item to reduce in order to balance the budget for the past 5 to 10 years. Council discussed the numerous complaints they receive every month about the condition of our roads. Council reviewed the money spent on road rehabilitation over the past ten years, noting that three of those years Council spent less than \$10,000 on road rehabilitation and one year there was NO money spent on road rehabilitation, Council knew we had to bite the bullet and start spending more money on road rehabilitation. We are fighting a losing battle unless we start spending more money on our roads. Therefore, Council decided that the best course of action is to impose a dedicated Street Improvement Tax. Every penny from this tax increase MUST go to street improvements.

Councilmember M. Oser stated that he reviewed the budget and that he attended the budget preparation meetings. He noted that he is disappointed that we have a 3-mill tax increase, however we have to fund government and the roads have been deteriorating and we need to try to get ahead of them sooner than later. He also noted that he is sorry we cannot reduce the money spent on Regional Police to help offset the tax millage increase.

Councilmember D. Casole had no comment.

Councilmember C. Williams stated that she is not happy about the millage increase but acknowledges the need for it, noting that our roads are in poor condition and they need to be taken care of.

Vice President J. Woehrle thanked the Mayor for the letter he put together explaining the reasons for the tax increase to the residents. Vice President J. Woehrle stated that we need to retain the infrastructure of the Borough.

Councilmember F. O'Boyle stated that he had heard through the grapevine about a grant from State Senator Mario Scavello.

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It was stated that the Borough has applied for an LSA Grant in the amount of \$175,000.00 for work to be done on Crestwood Drive.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Matt Hensel, Cedar Road, questioned why the dedicated Street Improvement Tax instead of a Real Estate Tax increase.

Borough Secretary/ Treasurer L. Noonan explained that Dedicated Street Improvement Tax means that the monies collected can only be used for street improvement and they cannot go to any other item thus insuring the taxpayers that improvements would be done to roads.

Councilmember C. Williams apologized to the residents, especially those who are financially strapped for this increase in taxes.

Matt Hensel, Cedar Road, questioned how many years until we are ahead of the streets.

Vice President J. Woehrle stated four (4) years of heavier spending could get us within a ballpark range.

There being no further comments from the public or from Borough Council, Councilmember C. Williams moved to adjourn at 7:23 P.M. Councilmember M. Oser seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Noonan, Borough Secretary