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Upper Darby Township Council

Special Meeting

November 8th, 2017

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A special meeting of Upper Darby Township Council was held on Wednesday evening, November 8th, 2017 approximately five minutes after the conclusion of the regularly scheduled 7:00 meeting in the Council Meeting Room #202 of the Municipal Building, Long Lane and Garrett Road, Upper Darby, Pennsylvania

Call of the Meeting

Members of Council
Upper Darby Township
Pennsylvania

Dear Members of Council:

There will be a special meeting of the Upper Darby Township Council on Wednesday evening, November 8th, 2017 approximately five minutes after the conclusion of the regularly scheduled meeting in the Council Meeting Room #202 of the Municipal Building, Long Lane and Garrett Road, Upper Darby, Pennsylvania for the following purposes:

- 1) Public Hearing for the purpose of review of the budget for the fiscal Year 2018.
- 2) For all other purposes necessary or incidental thereto.

Roll Call

Donald P. Bonnett, Thomas P. Wagner, Jacob A. Bierling Jr., Sekela Coles, Robert Gwin, Barbarann Keffer, Marc Manfre, Lisa Faraglia, Sheikh M. Siddique, Patrick Spellman

Edward E. Monaghan, excused

Mr. Bonnett: Ladies and gentlemen, are there any speakers who wish to speak on any aspect of the 2018 proposed Budget? If so, please come to the podium and state your name and address for the record.

Ms. Wentz: My name is Laura Wentz. I am the Upper Darby Township Council-at-Large Elect. I am a resident of 7549 Parkview Road in Upper Darby. My question has to do with yard waste removal. As far as I'm aware, yard waste removal is less expensive than having all of the yard waste going to the trash, right? And I know we do 1-2 weeks a year, one in the spring and one in the fall. I'm wondering if we did yard waste removal from March until November, how much money could we save? I personally have a sycamore tree outside my house and it is a tree that gives every day of the year, its bark, its leaves, its little ball thingys. You know, it's the gift that keeps on giving. It is a giving tree. And, I

know it's one of thousands of them throughout our Township so I'm thinking that maybe if we could separate the yard waste from March through November and collect all that stuff and re-use it and re-purpose it and then that way the weight of all that yard waste is not going in the trash and we're not paying for it as trash removal. We will re-purpose it for composting, wood chips, for whatever we need for our parks for everything that we do, right? And if we're re-purposing it makes us a greener Township and then attached to that is the Holiday trees. We collect them 1 or 2 weeks in the wintertime. A lot of people keep their trees up way into the month of January so what if we did the Holiday tree collection from the last week of December to 6 weeks from that point in time and those trees could be used for wood chipping, for replenishing the wood chips in our parks and our playgrounds. If we have too many trees, then we send them to New Jersey to rebuild the dunes in New Jersey and that is just one way that we can give back to our community. So, I really strongly suggest that we do that and I'm also curious if we could, how much could we save if we do 6 weeks for the Holiday trees and 9 months for the yard waste collection? How much could we save if we started doing it in the last week of November? I have a little tiny yard and a lot of leaves and bark and everything and I'm sure if we started doing that now maybe we could put the money we save from using yard waste and collecting that, the money we would save on the trash weight disposal that we've been paying for all this time could go into an escrow account and then it could start to pay toward the contractual agreement that we have with our police and fire department for the beginning of January without raising our taxes. So, this is my concern and this is my question. I want to find another way. Raising taxes should be the last thing that we do, so let's find another way. I'm a union person. I'm a hard-core union activist organizer and I respect without thought or hesitation the police department and fire department and so therefore, I 100% respect and believe in upholding union contracts but I want to find another way to fulfill those obligations without raising our taxes. So, this is my suggestion.

Mr. Bonnett: We will certainly take that under advisement. It is a lot of information.

Ms. Wentz: I know it is a lot of information. Thank you.

Mr. Bonnett: Next speaker. Anyone on this side of the room?

Mrs. Nottingham: Hi. My name is Stephanie Nottingham and I'm at 7547 Parkview Road. Excuse me, I have a speech impediment. With the construction going on in the Township, why is the vehicle being left in front of my handicap parking spot overnight? There are other spots so why it is being specifically left in front of my handicap parking spot?

Mr. Bonnett: You're saying that someone is blocking your spot? We can address that. This is a Budget Hearing and we need to stay on point.

Mr. Judge: This is the first we're hearing of this. We've had other instances where the equipment has blocked people and we've asked them to move it. We will take care of it.

Mr. Bonnett: Anyone else?

Mr. Harrison: My name is Gerald Harrison and I live at 29 S. Kirklyn Avenue. Question. Is there some website where I can get a breakdown of these numbers so I know what they mean? I was 30 years a lab manager at the University of Pennsylvania and I'm used to crunching numbers and I can't make heads or tails of the real meaning of any of these numbers. Where can I get more details as to what these funds are going to?

Mr. Judge: The Council people have the line item breakdown if they want to talk to them.

Mr. Harrison: And how do I get that?

Mr. Judge: Your Council person.

Mr. Harrison: It's not online?

Mr. Judge: That information is what is online. That's the information that we are required by law to publicly display. The Council people have the individual line item breakdowns.

Mr. Harrison: Thank you.

Mr. Bonnett: Thank you Mr. Harrison. Anyone else?

Ms. Hayman: Good evening. My name is Janice Hayman and I live at 727 Stanbridge Road in Drexel Hill. On page 4 I see the actual budget, the total grant for 2017 was \$5,083,577.00 and then on page 9 under expenditures, it only lists 4 of these 9 or 10 items and the total expenditures of grants is \$1,984,413.00. So there is over \$3 million that doesn't show up. So, what happened to that grant money during the course of 2017?

Mr. Judge: On page 4, the grant money totals \$5,754,888.00.

Ms. Hayman: That is the projected budget. The 17 budget was \$5,083,577.00.

Mr. Judge: Which budget are you talking about? I'm sorry. On the line, there is the 2017 budget, the protected actual and the 2018. Which one do you want me to address?

Ms. Hayman: I was just talking about the 2017 actual revenue of grants.....

Mr. Judge: And where it matches up on the expenditures?

Ms. Hayman: Yes.

Mr. Judge: COSA is a separate line item in the Leisure Services budget. Senior Centers is an item in the Leisure Services budget. HUD is its own item where we expend the monies

and that will fall under L&I and is also identified as HUD. Public Utilities on the grant go into a General Fund. The Volunteer Relief Association, \$235 by statute that falls under the Fire Department and that money must be turned over directly to the Volunteer Fire Relief Association for the Township. That is in and out. We don't spend any of that money. Pension plan allocations, if you look under the Police budget, a portion of that grant goes to the Police, a portion of that goes to the Fire and a portion of it goes to Municipal Pension budgets. And by law, we are required to report that directly to that so we take that money in and it has to be directly deposited within 45 days into the individual pension plans. The recycling grant is found under Public Works and miscellaneous grants go into various departments. If you were here when John McMullan spoke earlier about park grants, some of that would be in Leisure Service, some of it would be in field repairs and we can break that down for you in more detail if you'd like us to. So, that \$552,000.00 goes into various different departments.

Ms. Hayman: All right. Hmmmm. So, that makes it very difficult to go from the \$5 million and then you go down to \$1,984,413.00 and the rest we have to somehow figure out where all these other monies go to.

Mr. Judge: I just explained it to you.

Mr. Wagner: You don't have to somehow figure it out. He just explained it to you. That is the purpose of this Public Hearing.

Ms. Hayman: He did but is all that information in here or is that the thing that we have to contact our Council person to get more detail on?

Mr. Bonnett: Everything is in that budget. It's all laid out.

Ms. Hayman: OK.

Mr. Wagner: And, we hold a Public Hearing on it as the law requires and the Finance officials of the Township are here to answer any questions.

Ms. Hayman: I'm just asking because, you know, we're asking questions.

Mayor Micozzie: The point is there is a statute that says how the budget is presented. -----
-----.

Ms. Hayman: OK. So that is something that if I look more closely, it fits. I'll be able to--- those numbers out.

Mr. Judge: No you won't. I'm not going to mislead you. The Council person will have the line item details.

Mr. Manfre: So I'm clear. The gentleman who lives in my district, I supply this document to him?

Mr. Judge: No. You supply the line item budget distribution that I gave you at the last meeting where it says.....

Mr. Manfre: Is there a copy in the Township that I can give him?

Mr. Judge: You don't have the copy we gave you?

Mr. Manfre: No, I don't.

Mr. Judge: I can give you a copy. Absolutely. I can give any Council person a copy. You were all given a copy previously.

Mr. Manfre: Well, I don't have it.

Mr. Judge: You're questioning and I'm telling you. You were all given in great detail the line item budget.

Ms. Keffer: Tom. Would it be possible to get an electronic copy?

Mr. Judge: For you? For anybody to put it somewhere?

Ms. Keffer: I would just like it electronically.

Mr. Judge: You would like it electronically. We'll see if we can do that.

Ms. Keffer: Thank you.

Ms. Hayman: Also just to, I think it was Bob Gwin who brought up the feral cat issue? It certainly wasn't something that I thought of when I came here but I just wanted to mention that as a person who lives in Upper Darby, I had a feral cat situation a couple of years ago and I could not get anybody to help me with it. I tried animal control, I don't remember the complete details but we ended up giving up.

Mr. Bonnett: Ma'am, I'm sorry. We have to keep this on point. This is a required Public Hearing.

Ms. Hayman: I understand. I just want to say that Bob Gwin makes a good point that we need to make the information a little easier to access because it's a problem.

Mr. Bonnett: Thank you. Anyone else?

Ms. Jenkins: My name is Nicole Jenkins, 628 Beverly Blvd. I'm wondering under General Fund revenue how the police earned in the 2017 budget \$64,000 and the 2018 budget is \$58,000. How does the police department earn that money? If it's under General Fund Revenue.....

Mr. Bonnett: What page is that?

Ms. Jenkins: I'm sorry. It's on page 4.

Mr. Judge: It's the cost of accident reports. When there is an accident, the insurance companies or people come in for a copy of the report and there is a cost for the report. It's also police application fees. When we hired new police officers, they were charged a small processing fee. That's basically how they earn that. The majority of that comes from doing police accident reports and I think they charge the insurance companies about \$1-2 per page. We used to give them trading cards but we don't do trading cards or fingerprints any more. The police used to charge for doing fingerprinting for individuals but they don't do that anymore so the lion's share of that is police accident reports.

Ms. Jenkins: OK, thank you.

Mr. Bonnett: Anyone else?

Mr. Cowan: Hello everyone. Grant Cowan, 108 Ardsley Road. I have a question relating to page 1. You'll see under the 2018 budget that it says Fund Balance beginning and under 2018 it says we will begin with \$1,944,629.00 to start this fiscal year. My question would be if we have almost \$2 million, why would we need to raise taxes again? There must be something I'm missing. Maybe that could be explained to me.

Mr. Smith: If you look at the number below it, the revenue item (\$74 million), that is the expected revenue (\$74,858,000.00). You take that plus the fund balance to get the number below that (\$76 million) and our total expenditures are \$76,803,000.00. So, in other words, we only have revenue in the budget of \$74,858,000.00. We supplement that with the Fund Balance to equal the total budget.

Mr. Cowan: OK, I see. Thank you. I do have a second question. I just don't know what COSA is. Could someone explain that?

Mr. Bonnett: It's County Services for the Aging.

Mr. Judge: It's County Office of Services for the Aging.

Mr. Cowan: OK, thank you very much.

Mr. Bonnett: Anyone else?

Ms. Albert: Hi everybody. Thank you for having this hearing. My name is Sheera Albert and I live at 212 Glendale Road. So, I wanted to piggyback on Grant's question. Is this the full Fund Balance that we have?

Mr. Judge: No. It is not the full Fund Balance. Upper Darby Township has a Fund Balance Policy for rainy days and we try to keep a Fund Balance on hand for emergencies such as snow emergencies and things like that where we might run over the budget. We have a Fund Balance Policy where we should have a Fund Balance between 5-10% of our total expenditures of that year's budget. Right now, when we end this year we will have approximately 7.5% Fund Balance. So, we are using some of that Fund Balance for next year's budget and if we use the Fund Balance that we propose here we will have somewhere in the range of 5.75% Fund Balance. So, within the policy, and the question it raises and this Council addresses is what is the right number? If you go too high, people get upset and want to know why are you raising taxes and if you take it too low you run the risk of putting yourself in harm's way for that emergency that everybody hopes never happens but always seems to happen down the road. So, the 1.9 million is not all of our Fund Balance. We have a Fund Balance right now that is a little bit more than 7 million. When we use this, we will have a Fund Balance of 5.75 or somewhere in that range. I am talking off the top of my head but I can get you the exact numbers on that. But that is basically the logic behind that.

Ms. Albert: But even if you gave the exact numbers, they can change?

Mr. Judge: Yes. They will change within 30 days.

Ms. Albert: How much are we trying, or you trying, to raise taxes right now? Like, what's the shortfall that we have to.....

Mr. Bonnett: Well, we're always trying NOT to raise taxes.

Ms. Albert: Exactly!

Mr. Bonnett: But, we do have a cost of operating and we are about 2.5% of the millage?

Mr. Judge: It is 2.8% millage increase this year. Last year it was 2.3 and the year before it was 0.

Mr. Wagner: So, in the last 5 years it represents about a 5% total increase over that 3 year period. We do not like raising taxes. By the same token, we have a responsibility to the public to keep this Township as solvent as possible and to fund a very large police force and a very good and large fire department as well that serves more than 80,000 people to see that they are safe. Police and fire occupy about 60% of the entire budget. By the way, it should also be known that their salaries are largely determined by arbitrators in the collective bargaining process so we don't have direct control over that. It should also be

known, of course, and all Council people are aware of this and the public should be aware of this too that when you get your property tax bill, it's 3 bills. The Township is one part, about 30% or so. A smaller portion of it is the County. Fully, half of it comes from the school board and this board has absolutely nothing to do with the school board or what it determines is needed to run a very large and complicated school district educating a lot of children who speak some 50 different languages and so on. The point is that the Township is responsible for making 30% or so of your entire tax bill and as I've just explained more than half of that is police and fire. So, we're operating, and I think I speak for most Council people, maybe not all, that on the one hand we don't want to raise taxes any more than we absolutely must but on the other hand we need to keep the Township solvent and avoid plunging it into debt. We are next door to our giant neighbor, the city of Philadelphia. I think the city is some \$1 billion in debt or something along those lines. We're not going there, as least not as long as those of us who are currently holding office here continue to do so. So, I hope I've answered your question.

Ms. Albert: It's always good to have background information. I guess what I was trying to figure out is if the total funds are \$76 million and total expenditures are \$76 million and we have a rainy day fund, then why would we need to increase taxes?

Mr. Judge: We're using \$1.9 million of the rainy day fund to balance the budget. So, if we didn't use that, we would increase our taxes by the \$1.9 million on top of that. Are you suggesting that if the fund balance is \$5. some odd million, we should use that and not balance it? We should have taken more money out of the fund balance?

Ms. Albert: No. I had a different question. The other question which I had, had to do with page 2 with the real estate taxes. I notice that there are some delinquent ones, about 2 million of them. What would it take to go after those delinquent real estate taxes? Could we go after taxes that are already delinquent?

Mr. Judge: Yes. In the past couple of years we have worked with a firm to go after our delinquent trash and sewer and we've allowed the County to go after our delinquent real estate tax funds. We are talking to a firm right now to see if we can find a more aggressive way to go after our delinquent tax and sewer fees and also delinquent real estate taxes. So, we're looking at that and whether that will help next year or the following year I'm not 100% sure, but we are talking to a firm to step up our aggressiveness.

Ms. Albert: To me that sounds like a really great solution that you're working on because there are already people who owe taxes and we know that they owe taxes and some of them are absentee landlords who owe those taxes. It seems to me a real shame to increase taxes for people who are living here when there are people who are delinquent on taxes so I really applaud your efforts to work with that firm.

Mr. Judge: You can look and see that we do collect some delinquent taxes each year. We had that in our line item budget and everyone would like to see that grow.

Ms. Albert: Exactly! So, thanks again for having this hearing. Oh, and my follow-up is would it be possible for us to request that line item budget for next Wednesday? My Councilwoman is Sekela Coles. So, I don't know if I should ask you specifically or just in general if we could have them?

Ms. Coles: You can ask me directly!

Ms. Albert: Just to have for everyone coming so we don't have to special ask.

Ms. Coles: They should reach out to their Council person or I can someone to make copies.

Ms. Albert: Like the same way that we had access to this one or maybe a pile in front of the room so we wouldn't have to special request it?

Mr. Bonnett: If you'd like, you can come in during the day as well anytime to review the budget.

Ms. Coles: Or the Council office is on the 1st floor if that is easier.

Ms. Albert: Yes, I guess what I was asking was to make it easily available to everyone who wants to come.

Mr. Judge: We'll make it available in the Council office by Friday.

Ms. Albert: Thanks again.

Mayor Micozzie: Remember that it is going to say "DRAFT" on it.

Mr. Judge: Correct. It is not approved so it has to say "DRAFT." It will be stamped.

Mr. Bonnett: Anyone else?

Ms. Boyd: Heather Boyd, 315 Upland Way. Has this budget been presented to the public in any kind of way to put up front for people to watch or walk through the numbers or is this the first opportunity for the public to engage in this budget?

Mr. Bonnett: A couple of weeks ago, the Mayor made this budget available through his public address.

Mr. Judge: It's been on the web.

Mr. Bonnett: At that point, it is public information that is available for inspection.

Ms. Boyd: I sit on the School Board as many of you know and we do a very public presentation. We do those over the course of the year as we go through the budget and they're pretty thorough and people can ask along the way if they have questions. I would request that this body consider doing a public presentation of the budget where you go through these things first before you wait for people to ask these questions. These are the same kinds of questions that we get but we have it figured out ahead of time and do a presentation on the budget so that people have more information.

Mr. Judge: Mr. President, if I may, in years past we have done that and no residents have attended, only Council. This year, the Mayor had a Town Meeting the same night we had that -----so therefore we didn't have that public presentation.

Ms. Boyd: I understand the difficulty of communicating with constituents and the school board, we have at least the benefit of communicating directly with parents so we have a little bit extra and we still have that struggle so I understand. But, I do think making it publicly available, whether people attend or not, is very helpful to the budget. So, I just request that we do that in the future.

Mr. Judge: It has been on the webpage since the day after it was presented by the Mayor.

Ms. Boyd: Well, this particular budget is, I understand what you're saying but, in the school district we code everything very directly so you can follow along. All these questions here were essentially were "well, where does this go?" and "where does that go?" and we don't understand where it goes from expenditures and revenue so I think just having that opportunity is good. They are very complex budgets and people do want to have more opportunity to understand them. So, I encourage this.

Mr. Judge: But before the speaker leaves the podium, for the record, can we ask that you identify yourself with your name and address.

Ms. Boyd: I did when I came up. Heather Boyd, 315 Upland Way.

Mr. Judge: I apologize. It's just for the record.

Ms. Boyd: Thank you.

Mr. Bonnett: Anyone else?

Ms. Coles: I do have a question, Councilman Bonnett. For the process when the Finance Committee met with the Department Heads and met in Committee going over the budget, were all 3 members of the Finance Committee there?

Mr. Bonnett: They were.

Mr. Wagner: The answer is yes.

Ms. Coles: And when you met with the Department Heads, were the questions similar to the questions that you received tonight?

Mr. Bonnett: I was not there so I will defer to the Chairperson.

Mr. Wagner: I can tell you and both Mr. Gwin and Mr. Bierling can add in that the questions that we ask get even more detailed. This process takes hours and we ask a lot of questions of the Department Heads and they ask questions of us. It is a discourse; it is a dialogue that takes place. I was very satisfied with it. Mr. Gwin said that he was very satisfied with it and Mr. Bierling said that he was very satisfied with it. But, it is not a quick process and it takes a long time. We get into a lot of detail with each of the Department Heads as to what their needs are, how many vehicles are they using, what kind of equipment is currently of urgent need? I remember we discussed, for example, with Supt. Chitwood of the Police Department the whole issue about body cams. There are a lot of pros and cons about that. We get into some real details like how old vehicles are and whether their aging status becomes more expensive than getting new ones and so on and so on. That kind of a discourse and those kinds of details are discussed at length with Department Heads who I found to be very candid, very forthcoming and it was a good honest dialogue. Mr. Bierling, Mr. Gwin, do either of you have any comments?

Mr. Bierling: I think it came out very well. We came to a realization when Chief McAfee was giving his report about some of the apparatus that they use has a certification date on it, and correct me if I'm wrong Gary, but it's a 10 year safety thing that they have on it and they can't use it after that. So, it was pretty interesting talking with them and the other Department Heads. We had a big discussion with Joe Martin on what we're going to be saving on all the new street light being put up and everything and he was explaining different things that he'll be able to do with the new system once it is here so there will be a savings. We did go through that and it was quite lengthy.

Mr. Wagner: Bob?

Mr. Gwin: We did focus a lot, at least I did, on a lot of the Capital Budget to see how we were doing, what our targets were, where we were going, how we were looking to bring things ---and how that would create savings for us down the road. It's not an easy thing but you have to go through and understand all of the pieces that assemble to make it up. We're trying to do the best we can for all the people.

Mr. Bierling: One of the things that came up that really hit me and I think it was really good and it was Dan Lutz who said there is a website called Municibid where you can actually go on and buy used trucks and used equipment and stuff like that. Dan has used it a couple of times and he actually has a bid on a truck. He bought 1 truck that I think he said we paid about \$25,000 and the truck listed for \$100,000. So, there's a big savings in

buying some equipment that hasn't been used in some of the smaller towns.

Mr. Wagner: I will also add to answer your question as fully as possible that we're not acting in the dark when we as a Finance Committee look at this budget. The 3 of us are briefed on it by Mr. Judge and Mr. Smith as to the details of the budget and we bring, I think, a good collective experience to that process. Mr. Gwin is an accountant, Mr. Bierling has had many years of experience running the Zoning Committee in the Township and I am an attorney. I also ran a business for 10 years so I know how to read a budget. I kind of know where the bodies are buried in budgets as I believe Mr. Gwin does and Mr. Bierling does. So we came away from that process this year as we did for the past several years, very satisfied that we have seen the real details of what makes up this budget and then we bring it back here.

Ms. Coles: OK. I just have one question and I'm not sure if Mr. Smith or Mr. Judge would be the one to answer it. In terms of the delinquent taxes, are the majority of them the sewer and trash or just the real estate taxes? Do we have a breakdown or a percentage?

Mr. Judge: We do have a breakdown on them and I will get you that breakdown. I don't have it here with me. The majority of it is trash and sewer but the 2 of them are not that far apart in pure percentages.

Ms. Coles: And I know also that I have requested the breakdown of the percentage of the budget for my district.

Mr. Judge: For what has been spent in the 7th district and we are going to do that as best we can.

Ms. Coles: And then, Sheera, if you would like to go through that or see my copy of that. Thank you.

Mr. Bonnett: Does anyone else wish to speak on the topic of the Budget?

Ms. Jenkins: Nicole Jenkins, 628 Beverly Blvd. Sewer rental funds, what is that?

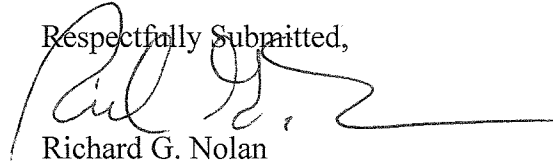
Mr. Bonnett: That's your sewer fee.

Ms. Jenkins: Oh OK. Homeowners pay that. OK, thank you.

Mr. Wagner: Mr. Bonnett, before we close this meeting, as Chairman of the Finance Committee, I would like to say thank you to all of the members of the public who took the time to be here tonight. This is a much stronger showing than I remember having in the last several years and I think it's very healthy and thank you for being here.

Mr. Bonnett: With that, seeing no one else wishing to speak, this Public Hearing is adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,



Richard G. Nolan
Chief Municipal Clerk

RGN/akc