

The

Gazette

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MOUNT HOLLY, N.J.

Westampton adopts ordinance to exceed budget cap

By Will Daniel

Special to The Gazette

WESTAMPTON - Committee members on Monday night adopted an ordinance that allows the township to exceed the state-mandated 1.5 percent cap on municipal budget increases.

Under the state's Local Government Cap Law, municipalities must limit increases in budget to 5 percent or the index rate established by the state, whichever is less, over the previous year's budgets.

The 1993 index rate set by the New Jersey Division of Local Government Services is 1.5 per-

cent.

According to Township Solicitor Ted Rosenberg, the state law allows townships to exceed the index cap and increase their budgets by up to 5 percent over last year's if an ordinance exists similar to the one passed Monday.

The measure passed by a 3-1 margin with Committeeman Jim Lutz voting no and Committeeman Dan Miller absent.

At the committee's March 1 meeting, Lutz protested introduction of the ordinance as "kind of like raising the national debt ceiling."

Township Clerk/Administrator

Rosenberg explained that he-

formally adopted its 1993 budget, the resolution was necessary to continue the flow of operating funds.

The resolution allows the township to continue to spend until the formal 1993 budget is adopted, Rosenberg said.

Donna Ryan said March 1 that police salaries and health insurance premiums for township employees are rising by \$80,000 this year. But under the 1.5 percent cap, the township could increase its budget by no more than \$32,000.

She said Monday that her pre-

liminary figures indicate this year's spending will need to be 3.5 percent higher than in 1992.

Rosenberg explained that passage of the ordinance would not obligate the township to increase taxes or budgets. Committeeman John Baker said he believed the authority to raise the budget, if necessary, was important for settlement of contracts specifically related to salary and insurance increases.

In related township business Monday, the committee passed a resolution authorizing \$893,607 in emergency temporary appropriations.

Ordinances to be reviewed in Westampton

By Will Daniel

Special to The Gazette

WESTAMPTON - The township committee last week tabled two ordinances for further review and language changes.

At its Sept. 8 meeting, the committee tabled the historical, office and commercial zone ordinance. Officials decided to postpone action on the measure so that language can be added that would specifically exempt existing farms.

According to Township Solicitor Ted Rosenberg, any existing farm usage would be exempt from the provisions of the ordinance

Rosenberg recommended that the ordinance state that the township will select the attorney, not the employee.

Under the ordinance, township employees and officials are protected from civil actions that result from their actions or failure to act in their official capacity.

When the ordinance was unveiled Rosenberg said the measure was proposed simply to bring the township code in line with New Jersey law and was not prompted by any specific employee incident.

Also at its meeting last week, the committee accepted the bid of

\$57,538 for a new ambulance for the Rancocas Emergency Squad.

The bid by T&L Custom Body and Equipment Company of Manasquan was the only bid submitted, according to Township Clerk/Administrator Donna Ryan. The bid fell well below the \$65,000 price tag the township had budgeted for the vehicle.

that reduces the required size of buildings and lots for commercial structures in the township.

"My recommendation would be to re-publish that change and have it ready for adoption at the next meeting," Rosenberg stated.

Under the proposed ordinance, a new commercial building must

cover no more than 25 percent of its lot size, down from 35 percent, and lot sizes are reduced from 10 acres to four.

A public hearing on the measure will be held at the committee's regular meeting Monday night, officials said.

Also tabled at the meeting was an ordinance providing for indemnification of township employees.

On Rosenberg's recommendation, the committee agreed to change language in the ordinance that allows employees who face civil suits as a result of their official duties to select their own attorney at township expense.

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Bond ordinance unveiled in Westampton Township

By Will Daniel

Special to The Gazette

WESTAMPTON - The township committee on Monday night introduced a \$120,000 bond ordinance to buy a new ambulance, refurbish a fire truck, and purchase new computer equipment.

Under the measure, the township will make a \$6,000 down payment on the purchases and issue notes for the remaining \$114,000.

Allocated in the ordinance is \$80,000 for the ambulance, \$20,000 for computer equipment and \$20,000 to refurbish the fire truck.

Township Clerk/Administrator Donna Ryan told the committee that the township will purchase all of the notes from itself, effectively borrowing from next year's budget. The net result, she said, will be zero interest on the borrowing.

Also on Monday, the committee adopted on first reading an ordinance to speed up the processing of payment vouchers for invoices submitted to the township.

Under the measure, committee members would no longer review and sign each payment voucher twice monthly. Instead, they would vote on a resolution at each regular meeting to accept a prepared bill list for payment, according to Township Solicitor Ted Rosenberg.

The bill list then becomes a part of the meeting's minutes and a permanent record of the transactions.

The committee must then pass a second resolution to specifically disapprove any voucher for pay-

ment, Rosenberg said.

Rosenberg said the measure requires the township treasurer to verify that each bill on the list is signed by a responsible township employee authorized to receive goods or services for the township, that funds are available to pay the bills, and that a line item in the budget exists for each bill on the list.

"In the interest of saving time, we should have an actual ordinance that deals with the procedures," Rosenberg told the committee earlier this month. "If the township is going to grow, you're not going to be able to continue signing each voucher."

In other business Monday, the committee passed a resolution accepting an auditor's report for

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the township for 1992. The report notes any discrepancies and deficiencies that may exist in the township's spending pattern.

Committeemen Jim Lutz and Dan Miller noted that the report contains repeat discrepancies and asked Ryan to point them out to the departments involved so they don't repeat again next year.

In a separate resolution, committee members agreed to renew the liquor licenses of: Northeast Hospitality Properties Inc., which operates a motel in the township; Russo's Liquor Store; Burlington County Country Club; Charlie Brown's Inc.; and the Moose Lodge.

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Westampton releases half of bond for municipal building

By Will Daniel

Special to The Gazette

WESTAMPTON - Construction of the township's new municipal complex is "essentially complete," said Township Solicitor Ted Rosenberg Monday as he recommended releasing half of the bid bond money to the contracting firm that built the structure.

During its regular meeting, the township committee approved the immediate release of \$20,000 to Hutchinson Contracting of Cherry Hill.

Two percent of the \$2 million price tag of the new building - or \$40,000 - had been held in escrow for faithful performance of the contract, officials said.

On Rosenberg's recommendation, half of the money will continue to be held until the contractor makes good on certain warranty obligations, officials said.

Hutchinson has agreed to perform all warranty work by Sept. 1, the date which both the township committee and contractor agreed that the one-year warranty would expire, Rosenberg said.

The new building's sprinkler system ran afoul of fire codes

recently, causing the township concern, officials said.

At the request of the township committee, a representative of Atlas Fire Equipment Company inspected the building on July 8.

Committeeman John Baker, who also serves as the township's fire marshal, said the inspection revealed 11 fire code violations, most of which the contractor has agreed to repair under warranty.

However, one violation resulted from a building renovation in which a partition was built, leaving one room "unprotected," Baker said.

In other action Monday night, Township Clerk/Administrator Donna Ryan announced that an unexpected \$400,000 tax bill from Burlington County may require a line item amendment to the 1992

budget to pay interest.

The tax bill, which Ryan said is due earlier this year than in previous years, may require the township to borrow money, she said.

In other business Monday night, Rosenberg announced that a contract has been drawn up allowing the Westampton Board of Education to become a tenant in the municipal building.

The contract will be presented to the committee for approval at its Aug. 3 meeting, Ryan said.

Under the agreement negotiated earlier this year, the school board will move eight employees into currently unused office space in the complex.

The contract calls for a 10-year lease