

Fairness In Taxes

Meeting Minutes 5-6-16

Board Attendance: Leo Burke, Bill & Sheila Hartranft, Michael Hinchman, Don Kerns, Vic Staniec & Jim Tweed

Meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance by Michael Hinchman at 3:00 P.M.

Guest Speaker – Robert Marzulli, Commander, American Legion Post #524

- The commander took us through the history of the American Legion from its beginning, WWII to the present, citing all of the work they do and programs they have to support all our veterans and their families. He also went over the work of their women's auxiliary.
- He then went on to say, with regard to the construction on the new Post that he would not discuss anything that occurred in the past, only their plans for the site in the future.
- They plan to have all future work done by volunteers, and hopefully will have successful fundraising to cover the expenses. No fundraising monies go to any post members. It is all used for their programming.
- The new post will allow them to expand their programs and service to veterans and their families.
- The cost for the project is expected to be approximately \$600,000.00. They will have solar panels and with their lease agreement for the panels expect to generate no electric bills.
- The completed post will be 4800 sq. ft. with a 200 sq. ft. deck.
- The commander did allude to some criticism they heard but was not specific as to those offering the criticisms.
- One post member did say he felt FIT should actively support the post. Michael Hinchman responded, that given their charter the organization may not be able to contribute, but certainly our members and himself could and should.
- He also explained that the property (land) belonged to the city, but the facility belonged to the post.
- Michael Hinchman did begin to ask a question on how the agreement with the city was formulated; but the commander said he would not discuss the city administration, at which point Michael said the purpose of the gathering was for free and open discussion on local matters. The commander did not comment, and he and all his members then walked out of the meeting.
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Education Report – Vic Staniec

- The NJ Dept. of Education released the average SAT scores for the 2014-15 school year for each district. Ocean City High School ranked 145 out of 391 with an average score of 1534 of a possible perfect score of 2400.
- As a result of the drinking water situation in Flint, MI, the state ordered each school district to test their drinking water. Ocean City checked all three schools and found the water tested 3ppm for lead, while the national standards require they only be below 15ppm.
- The school board passed the 2016-17 budget of \$40,945,201.00. The current year's budget is \$41,120,206.00, decreasing the tax rate from 0.18 to 0.17. The decrease was due to the fact that the interest paid on bonds that were renewed went from 4%-5% to 2%-3% over the next 7 years realizing a savings of \$200,000.00 per year. The savings to a homeowner whose house is assessed at \$500,000.00 will be \$5.00 on their tax bill. This makes 2 consecutive years that school taxes have decreased.
- The city will receive \$2.6m from the state through the school choice program; the same as last year. There will be no increase in the number of students.
- The tax portion of \$22m though higher, the increase in assessed value for homes of 3% will make this a wash, with no tax increase for homeowners.
- Longport has agreed to pay \$15,900.00 per student for 10 students from their district to attend OC High School. They do not currently have the funds, but Ocean City agreed to extend for 1 year, and monies for both years will be paid the following year.
- Vic explained the 2% cap on school tax. The district has a cap of 2% per year which can be accrued for five years or 10%; however, if they do not use the accrued funds by the end of the five years, they go back to square one, and it is capped 2% per year for another 5 years.

Miscellaneous

Jim Tweed asked what did the post commander really criticize, as it was not clear who it was directed at. Michael Hinchman stated we should at least be able to have free and open discussion, which can't happen when the other party walks out.

Treasurer's Report – Bill Hartranft

- So far this year we have received about \$6,000.00 in membership dues.
- Bill reminded everyone about the Spring Newsletter, requesting articles. Feels this may generate more dues payments.
- He also suggested we consider some kind of recognition (gift, etc.) for Jim Rudolph for all the work he has done over the years for our website, as well as some kind of recognition to the Library staff for the accommodation of us throughout the year. It was suggested that perhaps we could offer some advertising from Jim to generate revenue for his website business, but we'd need to clarify if he is actually interested in taking on additional work. At this time the website needs to be brought up to date.

Adjourned 5:00 P.M.

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, June 3, 2016, 3:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by:
Sheila Hartranft, Secretary