

WABASH MEETING MINUTES TOWNSHIP  
BOARD MEETING

Budget Proposal  
October 1, 2020 6PM  
Digital Meeting via Zoom

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Attendees: Michelle Wietbrock, Chair  
Brendan Betz, Secretary  
Angel Valentin, Board Member  
Jennifer Teising, Trustee  
Ed Ward, Fire Chief  
Gabe Gerth, Senior Account and Municipal Advisor  
Isabel Hogue  
Patricia Mason  
Mike Francis  
Max Sheets  
Susan Doster  
Ellie Mlynarik  
Karmen Vandalle  
Jim Lewis  
Jonna and Billy Jusko  
Jeff and Bobbie Egloff  
Bart Cole  
Tricia Fultz  
Morgan Cole  
Andrea Langrish  
Sheila Rosenthal  
Stephanie Sterk  
Melissa Widhalm  
Jim Goad  
Edna Williams

## Ron Scheffee

Meeting opened at 6:09P.M.

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Explanation of budget process - Budget proposal (today),  
October 13th discussion, October 20th - vote
3. Opening of the meeting - reading of budget ordinance
  - a. Chair Michelle Wietbrock explains that we are viewing a budget proposal for the year 2021. On the 13th we will meet for discussion and to answer public questions. On the 20th we, the board, are set to vote on the budget.
  - b. Senior Accountant and Municipal Advisor, Gabe Gerth goes in to explain the history behind this budget and how Wabash Township arrived in this position.
  - c. Following an explanation of the tax breakdown for homeowners in the township the Trustee begins explaining where we started (last year), why the township raised taxes, what that has yielded the township, and what we would like to do moving forward.
  - d. The Chair and Municipal Advisor present and explain the Form 4 (the ordinance the board is considering for adoption)
  - e. Chief Ward speaks to the need in the township (contractors still building homes, etc)
  - f. Municipal Advisor Gabe notes that the projected impact to tax payers is 2%-3% on their taxes.
  - g. Trustee Teising notes the impact of not adding the paid advisors.
  - h. Andrea Langrish how many rural runs do we do vs. runs in the city of west lafayette
  - i. Ron Scheffee, the tax and burden needs to be spread between rural and city.

- j. Randall Ward, can the township charge developers a one-time surcharge to offset costs? Secretary Betz directs the question to Gabe who acknowledges and will look into it.
- 4. Public comment
- 5. Close of meeting adjourned 6:56PM

10/13/2020 discussion meeting

Attendees: Chair Wietbrock, Secretary Betz, Board Member Valetin, Gabe Gerth, Senior Account and Municipal Advisor, Chief Ed Ward, Deputy Jim Lewis

- 6. Pledge of Allegiance (to open discussion meeting)
  - a. \*Chair then announces that the township board now has its own youtube channel.
- 7. Review of Questions Submitted
  - a. Chair notes that the trustee has answered the questions on the website as well <https://wabashtrustee.com/budget-2021/>
  - b. Question: Farm ground does not have homestead deductions, does it?(patricia mason) Nor do businesses or rental properties (Karmen Vandewalle).
  - c. **Answer: Agricultural, Rental, or Commercial properties do not have homestead, mortgage, or supplemental deductions, and for Tippecanoe County as of 2020, these classifications do not receive LIT Property Tax Relief either.**
  - d. Question: The 150,000 value homes reference reflects assessed value, correct? (Randall Ward)
  - e. **Answer: Yes, Gross Assessed Value – AV is utilized in the Property Tax Calculation. Example: (150,000 Gross AV – any deductions = Net AV X 0.0700 Property Tax Rate / 100 = \$105 Annual Gross Property Tax Bill – any credits = Net Property Tax Bill)**

- f. Question: What option is there for a tax assessment on all the sales of new-construction homes?
- g. **Answer: Contact Tippecanoe County Assessors office**
- h. Question: What income is generated by the growth? I do not see that factored in the mix?(jeff and bobbie)
- i. **Answer: The state will try and project growth which has been impacted by covid. The Property Tax Rate increase of around \$0.05 is generating enough revenue to pay off the Emergency Loan at \$451,768 (\$440,000 Principal & \$11,768 Interest).**
- j. Question: What is the projected growth in the tax revenue based on businesses and homes being built for the next 36 months.
- k. **Answer: There is no growth in property tax revenue as a result a potential increase in AV. With Indiana being a levy driven State that is capped on Levy growth based off the 6 year non-farm income factor (4.2% growth into 2021), the increase in AV will instead determine your property tax rate (Increased AV means a lower property tax rate to reach the maximum permissible property tax levy). Only time AV growth could result in further revenues is if a growth appeal is sent to the State or the CCD Fund is re-established back to the max.**
- l. Question: What is the township's assessed value by year 2015-2020?
- m. **Answer:**
- n. **2016, 1,826,843,030**
- o. **2017, 1,892,004,545**
- p. **2018, 1,882,468,955**
- q. **2019, 1,928,593,287**
- r. **2020, 2,024,501,452**
- s. Question: Will the need for 2 more full-time firefighters be explained? Please explain the rationale behind the increase

from 2 full-time firefighters to 6 full-time firefighters, and the impact to the budget for the cost of the new personnel including salary, benefits, training, equipment, etc...

- t. **Answer: Yes, that information is laid out in the budget. The need is due to medical runs in which the township participates but is not compensated. Units that participate in medical runs, historically, have only been compensated when transportation (ambulance) has been provided. We are not required by statute to provide this service. It is up to the board to decide if they believe these services are supported by a majority of the township.**
  - i. **The Chief adds that the state average is 82% fire runs to 18% medical and in 2019 we had:64% Medical and 36% Fire in 2018: 69% Medical and 31% Fire and 2017: 67% Medical 33%Fire**
  - ii. **Having 6 firefighters will allow us to have 2 firefighters on shift to have 2 folks responding to a call immediately (perhaps a third with our residency program) the state recommends 4 folks/roll out. We will be able to rotate 24 hour shifts**
- u. Question: What township capital projects have been completed each year in the past 3 years and what was the cost of these projects.
- v. **Answer: The CUM FIRE fund is a separate funding source. We aren't requesting an increase and nothing we are doing with the emergency loan is affecting any change with the CUM fund. The FIRE DEBT fund was established by the previous administration and Chief for 1.2M. The current administration has made the debt payments as required and spent less than the yearly allocated budget for the CUM fund. These funds are unrelated to the establishment of the EMERGENCY FIRE LOAN for operational expenses.**

- i. Over the last 3 years (2018-2019-2020) there have actually been 5 vehicle purchases.**
- ii. 2018 –**
- iii. 2018 Ferrara Multi-Vocational Pumper (Rescue/Engine) that was purchased to replace the retired 1995 Spartan/KME engine & the 1999 Ford F-550 light rescue truck. (Purchased using Fire Equipment Debt by Trustee Byers & Chief Francis)**
- iv.**
- v. 2018 Danko Mini Pumper that was purchased to replace the F-550 light rescue truck after the Rescue/Engine was already spec'd and had bids received. This truck has been stripped of loose equipment and will be sold in the next 60-90 days. (Vehicle purchased with Cumulative Fire Fund by Trustee Byers & Chief Francis. Funds from vehicle's sale will be returned to that fund)**
- vi. 2019 –**
- vii. 2019 Ford F-250 purchased to replace the 2013 Chevrolet 2500 quick-response/medical rescue pickup that was totaled in an auto accident in May of 2019. The accident was the fault of the other driver. (Vehicle purchased via insurance funds)**
- viii. 2020 –**
- ix. 2014 Chevrolet Tahoe purchased to serve as a mobile command / Battalion Chief vehicle for quick response of a department Chief Officer (Fire Chief, Deputy Chief, or Asst. Chief) to incidents to serve in a supervisory role to not only large or "working" incident, but also to general fire/EMS calls for service. The vehicle is equipped with medical supplies and also serves as a second quick response medical vehicle. The vehicle was purchased used and was**

**fully outfitted with emergency equipment. (Vehicle purchased from Cumulative Fire Fund)**

- x. **2020 Ford F-250 purchased to serve as quick response/medical rescue pickup to respond out of Station #2 to serve the south end of our territory. This vehicle serves in place of the 2018 Danko mini-pumper that is being sold. Furthermore, cost of ownership (fuel, maintenance, repairs, etc) of this vehicle is exponentially less than the mini-pumper that is being sold. (Vehicle purchased from Cumulative Fire Fund)**
- w. Question: What projects are currently in process and the cost of each? What projects are being proposed by year and the cost of each?
- x. **Answer: We do not have any projects concerning the 2021 budget.**
- y. Question: In the Sept. 17, 2019 meeting there was made mention a 5 year plan. Where is this 5 year plan?
- z. **Answer: Yes. Chief Ward and I have been working on this. Everything that we have discussed is in the budget projections. My office can send out the working document upon request @ [jennifer@wabashtrustee.com](mailto:jennifer@wabashtrustee.com).**
- aa. Question: In the Sept. 17, 2019 meeting there was made mention by the fire chief that there were going to be new maps and response territories. Where are these maps and are they going to be provided before the next meeting?
- bb. **Answer: The fire departments throughout the county have been working on this. Maps will be made available once the process is completed. The new maps are not relevant to the service area, they will not effect the cost of providing services to our district and therefore are not related to the current budget recommendations.**

i. **Our mutual aid map has been completed. The county has to put this into their GIS. There will be very little budgetary impact.**

cc. Question: What is the actual number of homes built in the unincorporated area in 2019 and YTD 2020?

dd. **Answer: I don't have access to those numbers. I recommend contacting the county.**

ee. Question: What is the actual number of new houses and building permits by year from 2011 to 2020?

ff. **Answer: I don't have access to those numbers. I recommend contacting the county.**

i. **Specifically call either the assessor or the county build commission.**

gg. Question: What is the breakdown by year for the type of each fire department call? (example, fire, medical, alarm system, nonemergency, certificate of occupancy, etc...)

hh. **Answer: Medical calls historically have accounted for approx. 70% of the calls. The 2017 total: 1166 the 2018:1141 2019: 1267.**

ii. Question: What is the cost per run by type of run for each year for the past 5 years?

jj. **Answer: The International Association of Fire Chiefs cautions against trying to factor a 'cost per run' due to having so many moving parts (especially for a volunteer agency). As an example, the cost for a lifting assistance call is drastically different than the cost of responding to the Lindberg Village fire. And even those exact same examples could be different based on the number of paid firefighters on-scene. There are two different calculations that are normally used to figure 'cost per call'. The simplest calculation, this takes the fire department's operating budget, which was approximately \$234,600 in 2018 — and divides by the total number of calls for service, which was**

roughly 1,200 in the same period. The result is an average cost of \$195.50 per incident. The capital cost of building fire stations or buying engines isn't included in the cost, but it does take into account the time and expense of training, prevention efforts and other costs associated with running the department. Cost assigned per incident: This method, which the fire department uses when it does any kind of cost recovery, tries to account for the actual hours of labor used for an average incident, along with the cost of the fire engine used on the call, but ignores the cost of building and maintaining fire stations and paying firefighters while they are waiting for the next call. Unfortunately, this is an incredibly difficult method for WTFD to use to get a fair depiction of our true cost per call. This is generally figured assuming minimum staffing for an engine (2 firefighters, 1 officer, 1 engineer) and each of them have different hourly pay-rates. Those pay rates are combined and then divided by our average call length of about 24 to 28 minutes and it would generate a value. It is difficult for us to use this method because WTFD doesn't typically respond with this minimum staffing and with the majority of those responding are volunteers who do not receive an hourly rate.

kk. Question: To gain a better understanding of the budgetary requirements for 2021 and in the next 5-10 years, please provide the historical economic development for Wabash Township from 2000 to 2020 broken out by rural and urban development as well as the 1 year, 5 year and 10 year economic forecast for the township including (but not limited to) data on rural development, urban development, housing, demographics, industry and small businesses? ( This will probably come from district/territory study?)

- ll. **Answer: We are working on gathering the information needed to establish a permanent funding. That plan will be made available once it's complete. We estimate mid 2021**
- mm. Question: What is the cost of the financial consultant and the financial study? Who is the financial consultant?
- nn. **Answer: Reedy Financial, we have estimated \$30,000.**
- i. **Secretary betz asks how much we paid in 2019**
  - ii. **Gabe notes that it is not his job to bill us but \$30,000 should be a high number for our projected work, with cushion.**
- oo. Question: What specific budgetary cuts have been done in 2018, 2019 and 2020?
- pp. **Answer: 2020 is the first budget set by the current administration. We did not make any relevant budget cuts to the 2021 budget.**
- i. **Secretary notes that we have had de facto cuts by not filling positions as they came open.**
  - ii. **Gabe notes that we have not had any significant cuts in the last 2 years.**
- qq. Question: What has been the change in full time and part time staff for all departments in each of the past 3 years? And what has been the financial impact to the budget?
- rr. **Answer: 2020 is the first budget set by the current administration. We have not changed the hours for each position.**
- ss. Are the Wabash Trustees? (homeowners in the township)
- tt. **Answer: I, Jennifer Teising, don't understand the question.**
- i. **The board notes that they are all residents of the township. Michelle Wietbrock owns a home in Wabash Township, Brendan Betz will close on his home on the 15th of October, Angel is a resident of the township, as required.**

uu. Question: Purdue employees are going without an income increase for the next year, what rationale is there for Township employees' pay increase? Why pay raises for everyone when the whole country is hurting now, to include people that live in Wabash Township

**vv. Answer: We did not take into account what Purdue is doing. The pay increases that I am recommended to the board are to cover the cost of living increases that our staff are experiencing (including in 2020). The position of this administration is that we have not been adequately compensating these positions and the fact that they haven't seen increases in the past is not acceptable. Everyone working in the township has worked hard and deserves to be able to continue receiving a living wage. As discussed last year, they have not been compensated at the same rate as the other comparable positions in the township. For example the current Fairfield trustee is compensated at over \$25,000 more per year than the Wabash trustee. The idea of withholding the less than \$700 requested for that position is ridiculous considering these facts.**

**i. Gabe notes that many entities are not doing pay increases, but many are doing 1%, 2%, 3% pay increases.**

**ii. Member Valentin notes that he is interested in having a small increase for staff, but would like to see the exclusion of elected officials from pay increases.**

**1. Secretary Betz notes that he concurs.**

ww. Question: If people are laid off and a bunch of unknowns, why are you proposing a large tax increase to us?

**xx. Answer by the trustee: The tax increase is required to provide medical services to the township. So the decision**

**isn't about if we should raise taxes it's about what services we want to provide.**

**yy. Answer from the board: We are in a similar position to other local government units in recent years, we are noticing an increase in demand for services and future needs. For that reason we are working to have the Township meet the basic, bare minimum needs that we face.**

**zz. Question: What are future funding plans for future growth since it's being funded by taxpayers?**

**aaa. Answer: We will provide the study conducted by our financial consultants once it is available. Mid 2021.**

8. Chair Wietbrock takes the floor to discuss volunteer willingness to come to a call during a pandemic. It is hard to ask folks to come out with this added layer of risk.
  - a. Chief adds, since COVID our volunteer response has gone down significantly. We have had to ask volunteers to be available when we know there may not be folks in the firehouse.
  - b. Secretary Betz asks if there is anything we can invest in to attract folks or protect folks and make them feel comfortable.
  - c. Chief Ward notes that the city of Lafayette only had 8 applicants in the first few weeks (usually they would get in the triple digits)
  - d. Deputy Jim Lewis notes that when he first started we did 100 runs a year we now do 100 runs a month. He also notes that he himself has to screen calls that he goes on due to his risk level for COVID-19.
  - e. Member Valentin notes that we have needed more support for a while.
  - f. Chair Wietbrock notes that it is nice that we have a volunteer program that allows folks to get involved in fire safety.
  - g. Chief Ward furthers the point- he and Deputy Lewis know of dozens of folks who went onto join career departments, many in leadership.



10. Public Comment
  - a. Seeing none, Chair Wietbrock moves to close public comments and adjourn the meeting, Secretary Betz seconds this.
11. Close of Meeting- meeting adjourned at 7:09PM

Adopted by the board 10/20/2020

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