The Meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by President Golinski. The Salute to the Flag was recited followed by the reading of the Open Public Meetings Act Statement by Deputy Township Clerk Kathy Costello.

ROLL CALL:
Present: GABEL, KUSER, SMITH, LYDEN, FITZPATRICK, SCOLLANS, PRESIDENT GOLINSKI
Absent: NONE

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: THOMAS ANDES, MAYOR; STEVEN WARD, ADMINISTRATOR; MICHAEL GUARINO, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER; CHRISTOPHER WAGNER, POLICE CHIEF; CAPT. PAUL NIGRO, POLICE DEPT.; WESLEY SHARPLES, FIRE CHIEF; LT. KEITH PARTIN, POLICE DEPT.; LT. FRANK PERNA, POLICE DEPT; MANY MEMBERS OF THE POLICE DEPT. AND THE FIRE DEPT.

President Golinski advised that there will be a public portion specifically for Emergency Dispatch questions or comments. He said that he will now open the public portion for any other matters.

OPEN PUBLIC PORTION: No one wished to be heard.
CLOSE PUBLIC PORTION.

Mayor Andes stated that over the last four (4) months Administrator Ward, Police Chief Wagner, Fire Chief and OEM Coordinator Sharples and CFO Guarino have performed an in-depth investigation of the available dispatch options and have considered the costs, benefits and shortfalls and what would be necessary to bridge the gaps of service if the Township were to switch to County dispatch from in-house dispatch.

Administrator Ward then explained the process that was followed to insure a true comparison of services and costs should the Township decide to switch to County dispatch. He said that three (3) alternatives were examined:
- 9-1-1 Call Answering Only (Option #1)
- Full Police, Fire and EMS Dispatch Service with a Tele-communicator shared with other municipalities (Option #2)
- Full Police, Fire and EMS Dispatch Service with a Single, Committed Tele-communicator (Option #3)

Administrator Ward noted that the Police Chief will go through each of these options and present the pros and cons of each alternative. He added that, as well as looking at our own internal operations, both Chief Wagner and Chief Sharples reached out to their counterparts in other municipalities within the County who made the switch. Mr. Ward advised that this contact provided important feedback, not only regarding the pros and cons, but also the hidden costs that we hadn’t thought of.

Administrator Ward noted that it was determined that option #1 and option #3 would actually be more costly than the current operating expenses for emergency dispatch services. He said that, therefore, the lion’s share of the comparison in Chief Wagner’s presentation will concentrate on option #2.

Chief Wagner thanked the Council on behalf of Chief Sharples and himself for the opportunity to give this presentation. A copy of the Chief’s presentation is included in these minutes.
The Chief covered each of the three (3) options in detail and presented the pros and cons of each option. It was specifically noted that, under option #1, the Police Station would be closed to the public between 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. daily. The loss of the interoperability of radio communications was also emphasized.

Mayor Andes commented that Administration thoroughly reviewed every option. He said that although there would be a savings, there would also be a significant loss of services and he described those items. The Mayor stated that this Administration which includes Administrator Ward, Chief Wagner, Chief Sharples, CFO Guarino and himself, firmly recommend to the Township Council that the people of Denville will be best served by the continuation of our own in-house emergency dispatch services.

President Golinski thanked the Mayor and all others involved in obtaining this very comprehensive report and analysis.

President Golinski then opened the floor to the Council members for questions.

Councilman Scollans thanked Administration for the in-depth report. He asked about the cost for the 9-1-1 system should the decision be made to stay in-house. Chief Wagner explained that his request for new software totaled $130,000 and the request for the console renovation was denied.

Councilman Fitzpatrick had a question regarding the Board of Education currently being monitored by our dispatch. Chief Wagner replied that, if we switched to the County, they will monitor only Police, Fire and EMS. It was also noted that the cost for future software updates at the County would be built into the Township’s annual fee, but the cost of the radios that the Township would need to be compatible with the County system would be borne by the Township.

Councilwoman Lyden stated that she feels the Township would lose too much control by going to the County and there is too much room for error. She said that she thinks the move would be “penny wise and pound foolish” and we should keep our emergency dispatch services in-house.

Councilwoman Smith commented on the interoperability of the radios in the Township and asked if Morris Knolls is in that system. The Chief replied that, prior to the Police Dept. purchasing their new radios Morris Knolls bought their own radios which are not compatible with the Police radios. He added that the Command vehicle used by Lt. Perna can communicate with the SRO’s at the school.

Mrs. Smith noted that the system we have works and she thinks we should keep it.

Councilman Kuser noted that if we buy this new 9-1-1 equipment, other municipalities may want to enter into shared services agreements to use it. Mr. Kuser stated that he agrees with the recommendation to keep the emergency dispatch services in Denville.

Councilman Gabel noted that the Council has been provided with a lot of good information by the two Chiefs, the CFO and Administration. He asked the Chief if he can provide any statistics from the Chiefs that he has spoken with, who have switched to the County. Chief Wagner noted numerous municipalities that he elicited comments from. He said that he asked for their pluses and minuses with regard to the County services. The Chief advised that one Chief, who inherited the County dispatch, told him that “you lose everything by going to the County”.

Councilman Gabel asked if the County has offered Administration any incentives to make it advantageous to move to the County. The response was that they have not. Mr. Gabel suggested that a task force composed of members of the Council go to some municipalities to get first-hand information. There was a discussion regarding contact with the County and it was noted that the bottom line from the County is, if you want County dispatch you will have to pay for it. There were comments concerning the quality of service provided by all of the emergency service units in Denville.

President Golinski asked how much time the Council has to make a decision as to whether to invest in the new software for 9-1-1 or to go to the County. Chief Wagner replied that “we are running on borrowed time”, and have been for the past eighteen (18) months with the 9-1-1 system.
Councilman Fitzpatrick commented that he feels the Council needs to hear from a representative of the County and get their point of view.

President Golinski stated that he would like to give the public a chance to be heard.

OPEN PUBLIC PORTION ON THE TOPIC OF EMERGENCY DISPATCH:

The following individuals came forward to comment:
Jim Crothers, Past Chief, Denville Fire Dept.
Chris Seugling, Denville Fire Dept.
Lt. Perna, Denville Police Dept.
Officer Mike Ambrose, Denville Police Dept.
Jim Henderson, Denville Dispatcher
Michelle McGlynn, Nurse and Denville Resident
Sgt. Bruce McCarter, Denville Police Dept.
Dennis Crothers, Past Capt. Denville Fire Dept.
John Jansen, Esq., Denville Resident and Boonton Twp. Fireman
Sgt. Scott Welsch, Denville Police Dept.

All individuals spoke vehemently and passionately regarding maintaining emergency dispatch services in Denville. They commented on dispatch delays involving the County. The Denville dispatchers were highly praised and it was noted that all emergency personnel in Denville have a rapport with the dispatchers and can count on them. The general opinion of all speakers was that the dispatchers in Denville are invaluable to the emergency personnel and the dispatch services should remain in Denville.

CLOSE PUBLIC PORTION.

President Golinski commented that Denville is a great town and it is that way partly because, although there are many departments, everyone works together for the good of the residents.
President Golinski addressed Mr. Gabel’s suggestion that a task force be formed. He said that he is receiving information from trusted professionals and he values the results of their research.
President Golinski thanked everyone who came out this evening and gave of their time to help the Council make the right decision.

Administrator Ward stated that he and the Mayor recognize that this is an important decision for the Council. He said that Administration has made its recommendation to the governing body and respectfully request that the Council President seek a consensus on that recommendation so we can move forward with the upgrade to the 9-1-1 software. Mr. Ward also requested that, if there is not a consensus to support the recommendation, the Council put a time limit on further research in order to move forward with the software purchase.
President Golinski then asked for a consensus from the Council, giving his vote first:

Golinski       Yes
Gabel          Yes
Kuser          Yes
Smith          Yes
Lyden          Yes
Fitzpatrick    Stated that he is not ready to commit without hearing the County perspective.
Scollans       Wants an independent body to study the situation and the Council to do its due diligence.
Administrator Ward clarified the consensus request stating that it appears that a majority of the Council supports moving forward with the purchase of the 9-1-1 software.

There was a discussion regarding whether or not it is necessary to have a County representative address the Council before making a decision about switching the emergency dispatch services to the County. President Golinski asked if the Township has received an official proposal from the County. CFO Guarino responded that we have. Mr. Golinski asked Chief Wagner if it is true that, whether or not someone from the County was sitting right here, we will lose interoperability if we go to the County system. Chief Wagner replied absolutely. Administrator Ward clarified that if the Council’s recommendation is to maintain dispatch in-house, due to the cost of the 9-1-1 software, a resolution will be presented to the Council to approve a State contract purchase.

There being no further business to discuss, Council President Golinski asked for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: MOVED BY MEMBER SMITH, SECONDED BY MEMBER LYDEN
AYES: UNANIMOUS

The Meeting adjourned at 10:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kathleen A. Costello
Deputy Township Clerk