

WEST SENECA TOWN OFFICES
1250 Union Road
West Seneca, NY 14224

TOWN BOARD PROCEEDINGS
2013 Special Districts & Preliminary
Budget - October 29, 2012

Supervisor Sheila M. Meegan called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. with 30 seconds of silent prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: Present - Sheila M. Meegan Supervisor
Eugene P. Hart Councilman
John M. Rusinski Councilman

Absent - None

Supervisor Meegan read the Fire Prevention Code instructing the public where to exit in case of a fire or an emergency.

BENEFIT BASIS & PRELIMINARY BUDGET

Motion by Supervisor Meegan, seconded by Councilman Hart, that proofs of publication and posting of legal notice: "OF A PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER THE SPECIAL DISTRICTS BUDGETS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013 UPON WHICH THE COST OF MAINTENANCE AND DEBT SERVICE THEREOF IS APPORTIONED AND ASSESSED IN PROPORTION TO THE AMOUNT OF BENEFIT CONFERRED AND THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET OF THE TOWN OF WEST SENECA FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2013" in the Town of West Seneca, be received and filed.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

Wayne Drescher of Drescher and Malecki LLP, independent auditors for the town, gave a power point presentation on the budget process. He explained that the Benefit Basis Budget includes sewer, water, lighting and industrial park districts and is a tax based on a benefit formula other than just the value of your house, whereas the Ad Valorem Budget includes the general and highway funds and is based upon the value of your house. The proposed tax rate of \$17.5659 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation reflects a 3.69% increase from last year and is \$98,021 under the 2% tax cap. The overall tax rate change over the last ten years is less than 1% per year and the proposed rate is actually 15 cents less than in 2006. Total appropriations included in the proposed budget equal \$44,634,087 and the total tax levy supporting those expenses is \$28,878,240. Over the last three years general aid to the town has gone down 8% and interest income is at its lowest level in many years. The appropriations portion of the budget presents many challenges with regard to fuel costs, major increases in NYS retirement costs and required capital improvements (roads and sewers), which alone added over \$1 million of required debt payments to the 2013 budget. The proposed budget uses \$300,000 of fund balance for the General Fund and \$500,000 for the Highway Fund. The assessed valuation increased approximately one-half of 1% or \$6,232,465 over last year. Mr. Drescher further outlined where some of the money is being spent (i.e. 34% on Public Safety (mainly police) and 31% on employee benefits). Real property taxes make up 53% of the funding of the budget while departmental charges and fees account for 12%. Of the taxes that are paid, the town receives 26%, Erie County 18% and the West Seneca School District 56%.

Motion by Supervisor Meegan, seconded by Councilman Hart, to open the public hearing.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

Dave Kims commented on the current economic condition and questioned why non-mandated raises would be considered. He suggested a freeze on wages that do not have mandated increases.

Supervisor Meegan stated the non-mandated raises involve a 3% increase for seven department heads and noted they have not received a raise since 2008. All other raises are contractual.

Councilman Hart noted that the proposed budget does not include a salary increase for the council members or Supervisor Meegan.

Amy Carpenter questioned salary increases for Planning & Zoning Board members and noted that some towns have smaller boards and they do not get paid for serving. Mrs. Carpenter further referred to the town's phone bills, specifically the historical society, and suggested combining phone services on one plan.

Supervisor Meegan responded that they had hoped to address the telephone issue this past year, but it will be a project for 2013.

Beverly Leising questioned how much money has been spent on legal services thus far.

Councilman Hart stated that the total paid for legal services through August 31st was \$43,649.

Mrs. Leising referred to the \$88,478 salary of Senior Citizen Program Director and the \$8373 salary for Director of Recreation and questioned if they are the same person.

Councilman Hart stated that the salary of Director of Recreation, Youth & Senior Services consisted of a contractual base salary of \$79,500 and an allowance of \$8,978 for any possible overtime.

Finance Director Laura Landers stated the \$8373 salary of Director of Recreation should be titled Recreation Supervisor and is a position held by a part-time employee.

Mrs. Leising questioned if there is a profit & loss statement and a separate fund for fees collected for I.D. cards and ice rink and baseball diamond rentals. She further questioned if the recreational fees offset the cost of the employees' salaries.

Ms. Landers responded the revenue collected for those fees are put in a recreational line item and are part of the total revenues that come into the town other than property taxes. Personnel costs for those employees are part of the General Fund budget in the Recreation Department and go into the General Fund in total. It is not a separate fund and is not required to be earmarked as restricted for that purpose.

Mrs. Leising questioned the expense of issuing an I.D. card vs. the amount charged for the card and if they offset each other. She further commented on how the NYS lottery was supposed to be strictly for education and how that revenue became part of their General Fund and was concerned the same errors were being made.

Supervisor Meegan noted that Director of Recreation, Youth & Senior Services Mary Josefiak has increased the fees across the board which resulted in over \$400,000 additional revenue to the town.

Councilman Hart stated that the State of New York tells the town how to account for their funds. The town is currently under the uniform system of accounts for the State of New York known as fund accounting, not enterprise accounting.

Mr. Drescher stated that a couple years ago charges for ID cards were purposely consolidated in recreation because there were numerous accounts to look at. In 2009 ID card charges were over \$14,000 and they have increased slightly each year thereafter.

Councilman Hart further commented that ID cards are not intended to be a money making item. The purpose of the ID card is to identify a user of the recreation system as a West Seneca resident. He noted that when looking at profit and loss, government doesn't always work the way we would like it to.

Mrs. Leising commented that there is nothing included in the budget for the Historian or Burchfield volunteers. She thought they should receive some type of compensation and the community as a whole should give recognition to those who volunteer.

Councilman Hart stated there are a series of appropriations for the Charles Burchfield Center totaling \$30,900 the majority of which is for maintenance.

Supervisor Meegan also noted that Town Historian Jim Pace receives a stipend.

Paula Minklei responded that volunteers at the Burchfield Center do receive recognition and are constantly thanked for their work. Mrs. Minklei further commented that the budget is difficult to understand because several entries for personnel do not include the number of employees covered and overtime is not separated out from base pay making it appear there are excessive salary increases. She thought notations within the budget rather than a cover letter would better assist with interpretation. Mrs. Minklei stated that in today's economy there should not be any pay increases for appointed and non-union personnel, although with department heads they should make more than the employees that work for them. Mrs. Minklei questioned if the Zoning and Planning Board members requested pay increases.

Supervisor Meegan responded the members did not request a salary increase but noted they have not received an increase in the last five years.

Mrs. Minklei commented on the historical property noting that nothing has been budgeted for demolding and preservation of the Metz House.

Councilman Hart responded that a decision has not been made going forward and there has not been enough discussion to properly budget for this. He further noted he would like to see the Metz House become a viable facility.

Mrs. Minklei stated she would like to see some "good faith" money budgeted toward returning the Metz House to a useful state. This would be a step toward showing respect for the Gardenville Historic District concept described in the town's Master Plan. Mrs. Minklei further questioned nothing being budgeted at the Burchfield Center for a storage and outdoor restroom facility. The Burchfield Park is extremely popular and the children's playground has been touted as the best in WNY by Buffalo Spree magazine. Mrs. Minklei state that people who enjoy the park deserve to have outside facilities with clean running water when there is no access to the building and establishing a budget line for the facility improvements would be an indication of the board's intent.

Supervisor Meegan responded that they are in the process of getting quotes from plumbers for a restroom facility and the foundation is already in place to accommodate a storage unit or garage. Conversations regarding the Metz House have also taken place and the idea of a fundraiser has to be considered if the costs to clean it up are excessive.

Mrs. Minklei stated she would like to be present at a pre-adoption work session where the town board reviews the budget line by line.

Amy Carpenter questioned the position of Director of Youth, Recreation & Senior Services and referred to a previous meeting where it was indicated this position was removed from the union.

Supervisor Meegan responded that at a previous Town Board meeting Councilman Rusinski had made a motion in good faith to remove this position from the union; however, the position currently remains in the union. A needs assessment is being performed and a decision will be made to determine how that position's duties are to be allocated. This is an employee matter and any further conversations will be with the union and labor counsel.

Councilman Rusinski stated he thought the passing of a motion made by him would accomplish this position being removed from the union, but because it is a union position, language from labor counsel and the union has to be written before this can be settled.

Mrs. Carpenter requested that the public be made aware of when this is settled and the position is removed.

Dave Kims questioned why the town wouldn't want to know the cost of the ice rink, swimming pool, etc. compared to the revenue it generates.

Supervisor Meegan responded that they do look at things like this (i.e. overtime for baseball tournaments) and the town has received over \$17,000 for the tournaments which pays for the overtime.

Mr. Kims questioned the increase in the salary of Bookkeeper to the Supervisor which he calculated as a 6.7% increase.

Supervisor Meegan stated that the salary increase is 3% and the remainder is the longevity. This position was put in the union a few years ago, but it does not belong in the union because it is a position that is at the discretion of the Supervisor. They will be having conversations to have it removed from the union contract.

Mr. Kims questioned the salary of Real Property Appraiser, which he calculated as a 7.4% increase, and the increase for part-time clerk in the Assessor's Office.

Ms. Landers responded that the Real Property Appraiser salary reflects a 3% raise and longevity.

Supervisor Meegan noted the Assessor requested a salary increase for the part-time clerk who is a 17 year employee.

Mr. Kims questioned the salary increase of Clerk Steno in the Town Clerk's office up approximately 24%.

Supervisor Meegan responded that the Clerk Steno salary is reflective of a 20 year employee who had previously worked in the Engineering Department. Her salary is now listed under the Town Clerk's office instead of the Engineering Department.

Councilman Rusinski referred to the salaries listed in the Engineering Department and noted the decrease in salary of the clerk from 2012 reflecting a new hire. The Clerk Steno salary is an offset reflecting a department change with the same salary.

Mr. Kims questioned the salary increase of part-time clerks in the Town Clerk's office which is up approximately 30%.

Town Clerk Jacqueline Felser responded when the tax office merged with the Town Clerk's office, the previous Supervisor did not include sufficient part-time funding to accommodate the work associated with the merger. Seasonal staffing is necessary during tax season and hunting license sales and this was requested but not included in last year's budget.

Mr. Kims questioned the salary increase for clerical in the Police Department.

Supervisor Meegan responded this is an employee who previously worked in the Finance Office and transferred to the Police Department so her salary is now listed under that department.

Mrs. Leising questioned the increase in postage from \$4000 to \$7000 in the Assessor's Office.

Supervisor Meegan responded that current postage fees are approximately \$6000. The increase in postage was previously requested but not included in last year's budget.

Mrs. Leising questioned why there was no longer a lockbox fee listed under the Town Clerk's office.

Mrs. Felser responded that \$20,000 was budgeted the past two years for the lockbox; however, M & T Bank does not charge the town a fee for this service.

Councilman Rusinski stated that he would like to identify the staffing levels of the town's part-time work force. He would like to see a unified pay scale for part-time workers and look extensively at the town's need regarding part-time employees.

Councilman Hart stated he has looked at the budget in detail and will be proposing it be tightened. He would like to see all the .4 contractual expenditures reduced and will be asking department heads to reduce their budgets by 5%, which will result in a savings of \$196,000 in the General Fund and about \$95,000 to \$100,000 in the Highway Fund. Councilman Hart was also interested in the projections for fund balance for the end of the year and whether more fund balance will be available.

Mr. Drescher responded that the Highway Fund depended on the weather in November & December and January through April is another critical period. He thought there may be a small amount of surplus if November and December is good, but would not make any predictions.

Councilman Hart commented that there are only a couple ways to tighten the budget. The .4 expenditures can be reduced and they might be able to appropriate more fund balance, but they are contractually obligated on much of the personal services.

Motion by Supervisor Meegan, seconded by Councilman Rusinski, to table the budget and adjourn the meeting until November 13, 2012 at 6 PM at the West Seneca Senior Citizens Center.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

JACQUELINE A FELSER
TOWN CLERK