

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

TOWN BOARD PROCEEDINGS
2013 Benefit Basis & Ad Valorem
Budgets - November 13, 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 to the Flag led by Chief Gehen.

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 BUDGET

Motion by Supervisor Meegan, seconded by Councilman Hart, to remove the 2013 Benefit Basis Budget from the table.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

Motion by Supervisor Meegan, seconded by Councilman Hart, that the West Seneca Town Board does hereby adopt the Town of West Seneca 2013 Benefit Basis Budgets (which includes various special district funds) as previously filed by the Town Supervisor and known as the "Preliminary" 2013 Benefit Basis Budget.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

PRELIMINARY BUDGET - GENERAL & HIGHWAY FUND

Motion by Supervisor Meegan, seconded by Councilman Hart, to remove the 2013 Preliminary Budget from the table.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

Beverly Leising commented on the salaries paid for Town Auditor Wayne Drescher and Finance Director Laura Landers and suggested hiring a competent accountant as Comptroller to reduce expenditures associated with the costs of these outside firms.

Supervisor Meegan responded that the town is currently contractually obligated with Ms. Landers' firm, Freed Maxick, and Mr. Drescher's duties as auditor are clearly defined. Going forward the board members will explore all possibilities at reducing costs, including the possible hiring of a Human Resource Director, Budget Officer, etc.

Frank Russo thought there were many areas in the budget where cuts could be made. He commented on the Planning and Zoning Board members' salaries and noted that some towns pay per meeting vs. having a set salary. Mr. Russo suggested paying the members \$50 per meeting, the Chairmen \$100 per meeting, and appointing a secretary to both boards at a lower salary. He further questioned the \$4000 salary increase for the Grantwriter.

Supervisor Meegan responded that the salary of Grantwriter Connie Miner is in line with other towns and this past year she made significant strides in finding the town an enormous amount of money. Also, through her efforts funding was reinstated for the police expansion grant.

Councilman Hart did not believe the salary for the Grantwriter was out of line and noted that the contract for this position is negotiated annually.

Mr. Russo commented that all the clerk salaries in the Justice Court reflect overtime. He suggested the hours for these clerks be based on a flex type schedule in order to decrease the amount of overtime in that office, noting he believes this is allowed under the contract.

Councilman Hart stated he had discussed flex scheduling with the Judge's and they were not in favor of it. Along with court, the clerks have a heavy volume of paperwork and working flex hours would not be beneficial.

Mr. Russo commented on the excessive overtime in the Engineering Department and questioned the salary increase for the Principal Engineering Assistant, Real Property Appraiser, Deputy Highway Supt. and Buildings & Grounds Department Crew Chief. He further questioned why the person in the Real Property Appraiser position had not yet taken the test for that job.

Councilman Hart stated that the salary for Principal Engineering Assistant includes the base salary, longevity and estimated overtime. They are working to curtail overtime as much as possible and it is a constant discussion with department heads. Councilman Hart noted that the energy project is providing updates and an automated system is being put in place at the pump stations. This system will allow activity at a pump station to be controlled remotely from a laptop so employees will not have to be called out after regular working hours.

Supervisor Meegan responded that a request was made over two years ago for the Real Property Appraiser exam but New York State has yet to schedule it. The salary increase for this position reflects a contractual three percent raise plus longevity. Supervisor Meegan further stated that the Deputy Highway Supt. salary is significantly lower than other municipalities and the increase is warranted considering the duties. The overtime salary for the Buildings & Grounds Department Crew Chief is reimbursed through revenues received for soccer and baseball tournaments.

Mr. Russo commented that Hamburg breaks down all the revenue received for recreation activities such as: ice rink rental, swimming, labor for lifeguards, etc.

Mr. Drescher responded that Hamburg has enterprise funds for the golf course, Woodlawn Beach, Town Park Beach and the ice arena. They track the revenue and expenditures on these to determine the cost to the town and whether the fees should be raised in the future.

Mr. Russo commented that the ice rink is not broken down and the utilities are hooked up with Town Hall.

Supervisor Meegan responded that the energy performance contract will identify the expenditures and they will have a better snapshot next year.

Director of Recreation, Youth & Senior Citizens Mary Josefiak noted that a breakdown is submitted to the Finance Department monthly for the soccer park and pool.

Councilman Hart stated he had a discussion with John W Danforth and the engineers concerning installing a meter to track costs at the ice rink. The engineers will be taking another look at that in an attempt to correct the problems.

Dave Kims questioned the result of Councilman Hart's suggestion that all department heads look at reducing non-contractual expenditures by five percent.

Councilman Hart stated he went through the budget line by line and made several cuts that may bring the tax rate increase below three percent.

Mr. Drescher stated that they went through each line and submitted six pages of changes to the non-contractual expenditures, which in some cases will be tight for department heads.

Mr. Kims further referred to the increase for Deputy Highway Supt. and stated that if a person with the same job title in another town is making more money it is not a reason to pay the person in West Seneca more money.

Supervisor Meegan stated that she met with each department head and discussed their concerns. Highway Supt. Matthew English felt that the Deputy Highway Supt. was deserving of this increase. The stipend for Deputy Highway Supt. used to be more money but the previous board cut the amount when the former Deputy Highway Supt. retired.

Mr. Kims questioned garbage pickup during a holiday week and whether the garbage is picked up in four or five days.

Mr. English responded it is a five day pickup on a holiday week and Saturday is overtime.

Mrs. Leising questioned if the town is making enough money on recreation fees (i.e. when the soccer field is rented are the fees somewhat substantial to the expenses).

Ms. Landers responded that expenditures are not broken down in detail enough to analyze the Recreation Department. Labor is not broken down and they would need more detail on the expenditure side. This would have to be tracked separate from the financial accounting system.

Amy Carpenter thought it would be worth the exercise to figure out what the town is paying for the ice rink, pool, etc. Depending on the cost, the taxpayers may decide against certain recreational activities and programs. Mrs. Carpenter further suggested working with the school system on buying paper, other supplies and even utilities.

Supervisor Meegan advised that the recreation issues are being discussed by the Recreation Commission.

Johanna Guenther referred to the decrease in population in the town over the years and questioned if there has been a corresponding decrease in employees.

Town Clerk Jacqueline Felser commented on the merger of the Receiver of Taxes office with the Town Clerk's office in 2011 which resulted in a decrease from two elected officials to one, four full-time employees to three, and five part-time employees to two. The decrease in salaries amounted to just over \$100,000; however, it was found that additional part-time hours were required to handle the workload and budget transfers amounting to \$14,500 had to be made to cover those salaries in 2011 and again in 2012. This was being corrected in the 2013 budget, but there is still a significant savings in salaries.

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

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

Motion by Supervisor Meegan, seconded by Councilman Hart, that the West Seneca Town Board does hereby adopt the Town of West Seneca 2013 Ad Valorem Budget (includes General & Highway Funds) as previously filed by the Town Supervisor and known as the "Preliminary" 2013 Ad Valorem Budget with the amendments as contained on the attached pages.

On the question, Councilman Rusinski stated he does not favor a tax increase and will not vote for one. He commented on the probable increases in federal, state and county taxes along with school taxes and noted they have to be cognizant of the impending debt load associated with the sewer project and other bond initiatives. Councilman Rusinski thought there should be a zero increase in the budget to reflect the economic reality of today and that hard decisions needed to be made.

Councilman Hart asked for specifics on how Councilman Rusinski proposed to reduce the budget and if he was suggesting using additional fund balance.

Supervisor Meegan stated they went line by line looking for ways to reduce. She questioned where Councilman Rusinski was suggesting the budget be reduced and why he didn't come forward before this meeting.

Councilman Rusinski responded that some hard decisions had to be made to reduce \$700,000 and he thought budget work sessions with department heads were necessary to accomplish that, noting there was limited amount of opportunity to give ideas.

Supervisor Meegan stated she had encouraged the board members to sit down with each department head to hear their concerns and needs. She thought this was a very good budget and it afforded them the opportunity to continue the services the town deserves. Supervisor Meegan further commented that they did their homework and each department has made sacrifices.

Councilman Hart commented that the cost of service is people in government and the town provides pretty good services. People don't get the kind of services in other towns that West Seneca offers. The only area he saw that they could change is appropriation of additional highway fund balance, but they are already appropriating \$500,000 in that area. Councilman Hart stated there is a NYS Law that allows municipalities to have fund balances and currently there is 21% fund balance in the Highway Fund at the end of 2011 and 12.9 or 13% in the General Fund. The NYS Comptroller's rules are if your fund balance is between five percent at the low end and 25 percent at the high end it is a reasonable, adequate and legal fund balance. If you go below five percent you run the risk of a bond rating downgrade and then the cost of borrowing goes up. Councilman Hart stated that they now have a capital equipment plan in place and will be upgrading all the highway equipment using reserve funds accumulated over the last several years. In this way they will avoid going into debt to replace equipment and the cost of repairs will also be reduced. Councilman Hart further commented that under the union contract they can't reduce employees in the Highway Department or Buildings & Grounds Department and the current contract goes until 2015.

Ms. Landers agreed with Councilman Hart's comments regarding reducing fund balance and the effect it can have on bond rating. She stated that bond rating agencies look at whether a town has a fund balance policy, what a town has available in their fund balance and whether a town is funding its reserves. This can have detrimental effects on interest rates going forward which could have an impact for the next 30 years. Ms. Landers further stated that Supervisor Meegan plans to have a quarterly budget review of revenues and expenditures at work sessions going forward in 2013.

Ayes: (2) Supervisor Meegan, Councilman Hart

Noes: (1) Councilman Rusinski

Motion Carried

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ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Supervisor Meegan, seconded by Councilman Hart, to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 P.M.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

JACQUELINE A FELSER, TOWN CLERK