

**TOWN OF WEST SENECA
1300 Union Road
West Seneca, NY 14224**

**CITIZEN BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes #2019-03
August 5, 2019**

Councilman Eugene Hart called the meeting to order at 7:33 P.M. Zoning Board Chairman Tim Eling lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Councilman Hart explained the emergency procedures.

ROLL CALL: Members Present – Town Councilman Eugene Hart
Town Attorney Tina Hawthorne
William Cleary
Edward Lalley
Kimberly Walkow
Stephen Stachowski
Barbara Lipiew
David Kims
David Rogers
William Josefiak
Joseph Celeste

Not Present – Christopher Skalski
Maria Kaskala
Suellen McAneney
Michael Yost
Scott Dobe
Mark Koller
Joan Lillis

MINUTES TO BE APPROVED

Motion by Mr. Cleary, seconded by Mr. Josefiak, to approve Minutes #2019-03 of July 8, 2019.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

COMMUNICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Motion by Councilman Hart, seconded by Mr. Celeste to accept the resignation of Raymond Nalewajek.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

Mr. Cleary recommended the committee go into an informal dialogue to gain knowledge about each of the Citizen Budget Advisory Board Members before beginning "Organization of Committee" Agenda Item #2.

Each of the committee members gave a brief introduction of themselves.

Councilman Hart offered information on the Sewer Districts

- Half of the town uses Town of West Seneca Sewer Districts. The other half uses Erie County Sewer Districts
- Whatever it costs to operate that sewer district is what is projected into the next year for the sewage rates. One of the calculations is how much water is used. Another is the debt service based on footage and value of a home. There are several other complicated items that go into it
- An accountant that works on this can come in and present to the Committee
- The Town Board does not do a lot of work on this matter because it is mostly based on cost

Regarding the replacement of police cars and equipment or machinery, Councilman Hart suggested that this committee can explore the idea of a Lease Management Contract.

Regarding revenue, Councilman Hart advised that one can look at the trends over the years. For example, home sales affects the amount of franchise fees received. Sales tax largely depends on the economy. Traffic tickets generally follow a straight line. Major fees include: sales tax, franchise-v tax, and fines and forfeitures. The rest of the fees are smaller and harder to project in the budget.

Councilman Hart recommended the committee members look into "Open Book New York" which will offer a lot of data that can be manipulated and stored. Committee members can do an analysis or schedule with data specific to each community in New York State. One can see trends in West Seneca up to 5 years, which will offer the committee insight on how the Town Board budgets and how close their numbers are.

Ms. Lipiew asked, "How do the department heads determine what they need?" Councilman Hart explained that all department heads are experienced employees and know what they need and what they are going to ask for. The Board then has to decide what fits within their budget. There are payroll reports that are used to determine the budget. Each department head receives a "budget package", which gives them a comparison of the past five (5) years. Department heads fill out a worksheet. Equipment is usually funded by equipment reserve fund.

Councilman Hart explained that if the Town Board has to exceed the tax cap, they have to first pass a local law, which is routine. The tax cap is recalculated every year.

Mr. Stachowski asked how other towns remain within their tax cap. Councilman Hart explained that each town is different and usually the towns that can remain within the tax cap are much smaller than West Seneca is.

Mr. Cleary suggested a major shift in order to avoid exceeding the budget. Councilman Hart pointed out that the town board has not exceeded the budget in the seven years he has been in office. Mr. Cleary asked if they have exceeded the 2% tax cap. Councilman Hart confirmed that they have exceeded the 2% tax cap, which he said is not the same as exceeding the planned 40 million dollar budget. He added that they have limited spending even further and increased saving in order to comply with request by Moving Services, who was critical of the town using fund balances to lower taxes. Saving will help with future emergencies like flooding. Mr. Cleary expressed that if the town did not exceed the 2% tax cap, that they would then exceed the town budget. Councilman Hart disagreed.

Mr. Stachowski explained that his purpose in joining the Citizen Budget Advisory Committee is to see what can be done to change the public's mindset that West Seneca has expensive taxes that go up every year. He wants to explore what can be done so that West Seneca is not facing tax increases.

Councilman Hart pointed out that the Town of West Seneca cannot control the county and school tax.

Councilman Hart confirmed that the town budgets for overtime for each department head.

Councilman Hart said that generally speaking, the town board only controls about 20-30% of the town budget. This is largely due to fixed costs. 53% of budget is fixed costs, which is before payment for employees. 20-30% of the budget is heating, purchase of vehicles, paving, paving materials, rentals, maintenance of buildings, and parks. Sewers is a separate fund and simply based on cost, which is determined by experts. He suggested that this committee can explore that 20-30%.

Mr. Rogers inquired about worker's comp. Councilman Hart explained that worker's comp depends on how many injuries might occur in a period. Each injury is thoroughly examined and challenged by a private contractor that the town utilizes. When the town gets an order to pay an award, the town must pay within ten (10) days. Town Attorney Hawthorne mentioned that worker's comp is something the town board is looking closely at and the committee should consider exploring this topic.

Organization of the Committee:

Mr. Stakowski suggested a motion to make Mr. Cleary the Chairman of the Committee. Mr. Stakowski respectfully declined.

Motion by Mr. Cleary, seconded by Mr. Rogers, to have Amelia Greenan act as secretary to the committee.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried

Chairman and Vice Chairman Duties and Appointment were tabled to the next meeting based on low attendance.

Mr. Clary suggested subcommittees:

- 1) Public Safety – to include Police, Dispatch, Courts, Town Prosecutor, and Emergency Response
- 2) Town Highway – to include Highway, Sanitation, Buildings and Grounds, Sewer and Engineering
- 3) Administration of Services – to include Building Inspector's Office, Town Board, Staff Personnel, Clerk's Office, Human Resources, Finance, Recreation, Senior Services, Assessor's Office, Town Attorney, Boards and Commissions.

Mr. Stakowski suggested that subcommittees be more specific.

Mr. Rogers asked if it is necessary for the committee to have legal representation. Town Attorney Hawthorne commented that she did not think it was necessary. The committee concluded that they will not plan to utilize an attorney.

Councilman Hart led a brief discussion on Labor Contracts. There would be a cost to have a labor attorney present to the committee. The committee concluded it is not necessary at this time to bring in a labor attorney.

The Committee's Mission was tabled to next meeting.

The Committee opened to the public for comment. Students present received signatures for school. There were no comments.

The next meeting will be held September 16th at 7:00pm in the West Seneca Community Center.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Cleary, seconded by Mr. Celeste to adjourn the meeting at 8:56 p.m.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried



Amelia S. Greenan

Secretary to the Citizen Budget Advisory Committee