

WEST SENECA TOWN OFFICES
1300 Union Road
West Seneca, NY 14224

WORK SESSION
2022 Tentative Ad Valorem Budget &
2022 Tentative Benefit Basis Budget
October 6, 2021

The meeting was held in the Community Room at the West Seneca Community Center, 1300 Union Road and called to order at 6:30 P.M. by Supervisor Dickson followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: Present - Gary Dickson Supervisor
William Bauer Councilman
Joseph Cantafio Councilman
William Hanley Councilman
Jeffrey Piekarec Councilman

Absent - None

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

Director of Finance Alissa Straus gave the attached presentation on the proposed 2022 tentative 2022 tentative Ad Valorem Budget. and 2022 tentative benefit Basis Budget.

Supervisor Dickson gave the attached presentation.

Town Board

No comments or questions were received.

Town Justice Department

Supervisor Dickson stated the Salaries for Justice Clerks, second line to be increased by a few thousand dollars to include potential steps and the Equipment line includes the JCAP grant which could be reimbursed if its awarded.

Supervisor's Office

Councilman Hanley would like to eliminate the stipend for Deputy Supervisor stating this position has never received a stipend.

Supervisor Dickson stated the Deputy Highway Superintendent receives \$6,000, the Deputy Clerk makes \$2,500 and the Deputy Supervisor is at least as important as the Deputy Clerk, if there is any value in the position it is worth paying them; but it's a valid request to reduce it.

Supervisor Dickson asked the Board if opinions should be expressed now or wait until the Preliminary Budget hearing.

Councilman Bauer stated the Deputy Supervisor budget line has never existed and it should be eliminated.

Councilman Cantafio stated the process followed last year worked well when items were brought up, further researched, and discussed.

Councilman Piekarec stated this is agreeable to him.

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Councilman Bauer stated the overtime budgeted is high compared to the year to date amount used in 2021 and the salary increase for the secretary is excessive at 12%. Supervisor Dickson stated the salary was approved in 2019 for the former secretary and his secretary is at least as good.

Councilman Hanley stated the salaries were reduced so the new secretary would start at a lower step and agrees Ms. Greenan is doing a great job. Councilman Hanley stated Ms. Greenan took an \$11,000 pay cut to take the position in West Seneca.

Councilman Cantafio stated the Town Clerk, Highway Superintendent, and Supervisor should get raises as full time employees and would support this. Supervisor Dickson stated elected officials should have pay raises only when an election intervenes, and he would propose a 10% increase. Councilman Piekarec agrees with Supervisor Dickson and suggested a local law could be passed. Councilman Cantafio stated it puts the three positions in a bad position to have an election on top of a 10% increase; the public would be able to digest a 2% annual increase more easily. Councilman Bauer stated he agrees with a 2% annual increase to be more in line with the town employees.

Finance Department

No comments or questions were received.

Independent Auditing

No comments or questions were received.

Budget Department

No comments or questions were received.

Assessor's Office

No comments or questions were received.

Town Clerk's Office

Supervisor Dickson noted the increase in the Records Management Expense line is for the social media and agenda software.

Town Attorney's Office

Councilman Hanley referred to the decrease of \$25,000 in the Contracted Legal Services – Litigation line and stated he would like to reduce it by a total of \$50,000 because in 2021 the town has only spent \$78,870 so far and there are no pending issues that will cost the town a lot of money. Supervisor Dickson stated \$150,000 is a reasonable amount and it would be nice to have leftover money at the end of the year.

Human Resources

Supervisor Dickson stated this line fully funds the human resources consultant, EBC and the hopes of replacing them did not pan out; the town is receiving more value with the current representative assigned to the town.

Councilman Hanley stated he is proposing to cut the entire \$88,000 for many reasons including the quality of work EBC is providing, part-time employees and board employees paychecks were late, and they aren't always available. The brunt of the work is being done by the Town Clerk, Director of Finance, Recreation Supervisor, and Town Attorney.

Supervisor Dickson stated he disagrees, and many problems experienced at the beginning of the year were resolved with the current EBC representative who is very responsive and knowledgeable. Director of Finance Straus stated they are currently on target to be over budget due to the monthly contractual costs being \$75,000 without accounting for the monthly time-keeping system and ACA filing fees.

Councilman Hanley stated he believed the Department Heads are doing the timeclock (Swipe-clock) work and not EBC. Ms. Straus stated the town is billed \$3 per month per person for the Swipe-clock software; there are many options for time-keeping software that could be investigated.

Councilman Piekarec stated he would like to investigate other options, but with two hundred plus full time employees along with dozens of part-time employees the town needs someone that is knowledgeable about HR.

Councilman Hanley agrees but stated department heads are doing the work now and the town is not getting any value. Supervisor Dickson stated things have changed and the town is getting the value from the EBC; additionally, it is advantageous to have a neutral third party.

Councilman Cantafio stated he would like to see a full-time inhouse HR person that would report to the Supervisor and acknowledged Supervisor Dickson feels that the current situation is working, and therefore he has backed off on the idea. Councilman Cantafio also agrees with Councilman Hanley the town should always be exploring options.

Supervisor Dickson stated a full-time employee would most certainly cost the town more due to the expense of providing benefits. Additionally, Ms. Straus has a full time job in Finance and is not going to do HR work, but she could offer insight on how to streamline the way the town is handling personnel because of her experience as the personnel officer in Hamburg.

Engineering Department **Buildings**

Supervisor Dickson stated they are budgeting for a truck and a plotter.

Councilman Bauer referred to the Salary of the Clerk line and questioned the lower amount. Ms. Straus stated there was a retirement this past year and the new employee will start at a lower step.

Highway Superintendent Adams stated the truck purchased this year was more expensive than what the anticipated truck should cost this coming year.

Councilman Bauer questioned if the amount budgeted for Professional Services could be lowered to \$100,000. Councilman Hanley stated he believes the contract was for \$75,000 not to exceed \$125,000 with the \$50,000 available for special projects. Ms. Straus stated actual expenditures for 2021 are at \$98,000 or 78% of the amount budgeted. Councilman Piekarec stated he would like to shop around for another company. Supervisor Dickson stated the town did attempt to hire an engineer but could not fill the position for the salary of \$100,000 offered; Town Engineer Tanner stated a competitive salary would be \$125,000 plus the cost of benefits. Councilman Bauer stated Mr. Tanner is a wealth of information for the current Town Board. Councilman Hanley stated CPL can consult with civil, construction, and concrete engineers without billing the town.

Buildings – Community Center

No comments or questions were received.

Central Printing and Mailing

Supervisor Dickson stated I-Evolve still has the town's phones service and this is being budgeted under the Telephone line.

Special Items

Supervisor Dickson stated the Erie County Chargebacks line is for the bill the county sends to the town and most of the Contingent Account line is to cover a possible agreement with Blue-Collar, \$130,000 - \$140,000. Further, as the NYS Comptroller advised the town that they cannot have a Highway Contingency fund, the balance is a combination of this and the General Contingency fund.

Police Department

Supervisor Dickson stated the budget allows for bodycams, new speed guns, and the Traffic Program overtime because of resident complaints about speeding and noted Chief Baker has recommended combining the Traffic Program lines with Community Policing Program Salary and Equipment lines for this coming year. Additionally, ammunition expenses are up, and the Endeavor Social Worker and their computer system are paid for out of the Other Expenses line.

Councilman Hanley referred to the addition of one new Captain, two new Police Officers, one new Public Safety Dispatcher, and two new Detectives and stated with more eyes and feet on the streets he is requesting a reduction of \$5,000 from the Traffic Program and \$3,000 from the Overtime line. Chief Baker stated the overtime line can be greatly impacted by unforeseen events and this year he raised the amount by the 2.5% increase reflective of the salary increase per the PBA contract; he is not aware of how the amount of \$310,000 was arrived at for 2021.

Supervisor Dickson stated all positions are not newly created as the Detectives and Captain are promotional roles and the Dispatcher as vacated last year due to a promotion.

Councilman Bauer asked if the Equipment line represented the cost of bodycams. Chief Baker confirmed it is. Councilman Bauer questioned the increase of \$40,000 in the Other Expenses line. Supervisor Dickson stated that is the employee from Endeavor. Councilman Piekarec asked if the line could be renamed for clarity.

Councilman Bauer stated a better budget comparison for the Police Department would be 2019. Supervisor Dickson stated the twelve new officers start at a lower rate.

Councilman Piekarec asked what impact the bodycams will have going forward. Chief Baker stated they will be around \$75,000 per year for five years.

Councilman Bauer stated he would like to have three additional Police Officers for impaired driving due to cannabis consumption and would like this cost included in the budget. Chief Baker stated it is a three week course and he will confirm the cost.

Chief Baker stated the Police Department IT provider Synchronet has indicated the following items that need to be addressed: upgrade to the firewall with a onetime cost of \$4,500; migrate email accounts to a Cloud with a onetime cost of \$3,500 and an \$800 per month cost thereafter.

Chief Baker stated the Court Security Officers have not received a raise since 2017 and would like to give them one by increasing the line from \$38,000 by 10%. Supervisor Dickson stated the purpose of the current JCAP grant is to improve the audio in the courtroom and asked Chief Baker how it might affect the number of Court Security Officers he would need if the meetings were moved back to the courtroom. Chief Baker stated the numbers would remain the same regardless of the location. Councilman Cantafio asked Chief Baker if he was asking for \$3,800. Chief Baker confirmed this. Councilman Piekarec stated law enforcement should be present at every meeting because "we're always one lunatic away from a tragedy."

Traffic Control

Supervisor Dickson stated the amount was raised to reflect the actual cost of replacing one traffic light.

Councilman Hanley asked Highway Superintendent Adams if the cost to buy new generators for the traffic signals. Mr. Adams stated this line is for the signals, the Equipment Repairs and Maintenance line in the Electrical Department has been increased to upgrade one intersection per year.

Councilman Bauer asked how many signals the town owns. Mr. Adams stated the town controls and maintains thirteen and they also do the generators for NYS road signals.

Electrical Department

No comments or questions were received.

Buildings and Grounds

No comments or questions were received.

Dog Control

Councilman Piekarec stated he does not believe the \$7,000 should be budgeted.

Animal Control

No comments or questions were received.

Board of Plumbing Examiners

No comments or questions were received.

Code Enforcement

Supervisor Dickson stated a \$1 per hour raise is budgeted for the part-time Fire Inspector.

Highway Superintendent Adams stated the budget reflects a pickup truck, but the department decided a smaller SUV is sufficient and it will cost less; however, a pickup truck should cost less than \$45,000 in 2022.

Councilman Piekarec requested the Salary of Assistant Inspector be further divided to differentiate Code Enforcement Officer Schieber from the Assistant Inspector. Supervisor Dickson stated the position of Code Enforcement Officer was not filled; Mr. Schieber received a stipend to his hourly rate. Councilman Hanley stated

Mr. Schieber was not comfortable leaving the Union so an agreement was made with the Union. Supervisor Dickson asked Ms. Straus to confirm Mr. Schieber's title.

Councilman Bauer referred to the Salary of Fire Inspector Part-time and asked why there was nothing in the year-to date actual. Ms. Straus stated there was a classification error in the current payroll system which should be corrected when the new payroll system is active.

Vital Statistics

No comments or questions were received.

Superintendent of Highways

Highway Superintendent Adams referred to the Salary of Account Clerks and asked for confirmation that the appointed secretary will still be entitled to the benefits afforded by the White-Collar Contract. Councilman Bauer noted there is zero on the year to date for this line, also, and wants to be sure it is not budgeted twice. Ms. Straus will investigate this also. Supervisor Dickson stated until 2021 they were included in the Highway Department Laborer line. Mr. Adams asked if the positions should remain in the Highway Fund. Ms. Straus stated a step increase should be included in the budget due to salary step increases. Councilman Bauer stated he would like them to remain in the General Fund. Supervisor Dickson asked if there is a benefit to the employee not to be tied to the White Collar Contract, such as receiving a raise if a contract is being negotiated. Mr. Adams stated the employee has always followed the White Collar Contract.

Councilman Bauer referred to the Sign Maintenance line and stated a larger concern seems to be tote replacement and asked if this is budgeted for. Mr. Adams stated there is a line item under Sanitation and Recycling that includes this cost.

Highway Garage Department

No comments or questions were received.

Street Lighting

No comments or questions were received.

Veterans Services

Supervisor Dickson stated last year monuments were moved and it was decreased for 2022.

Community Development

Supervisor Dickson stated this is the contract with the West Seneca Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Straus stated the increase of \$115 is for an annual renewal item.

Buildings and Grounds Department

Supervisor Dickson referred to the letter submitted by Steve Hanavan with his justification for adding a position noting two positions were not replaced following retirements in 2020 and there is an increase in the water for the splash pad.

Councilman Piekarec stated he disagrees with the recommendation to add a person to the daytime shift; adding a person to second shift might be beneficial when an agreement is reached with the union and would like to move some money to the part-time lines for additional evening and weekend coverage.

Highway Superintendent Adams stated this is about getting the department back to normal and there are many things the Buildings and Grounds Department maintain; a full time employee offers reliability that part-timers do not. There are projects such as the pavilion at Veteran's Park and the proposed one at Harlem Road Park could be done for a fraction of the cost by town employees. Supervisor Dickson stated adding the money to the budget does not mean the town must hire someone.

Mr. Adams stated he would like to increase the part-time labor line to \$195,000 as minimum wage is increasing and 2018 and 2019 offer a better comparison.

Councilman Bauer referred to the Continuing Education and Training line and would like to have additional employees certified for pool maintenance. Mr. Adams stated the town is only required to have one employee certified but agrees it is a good idea.

Councilman Bauer stated reducing the Water line to \$35,000 should be enough to cover next year noting as of September 30th the town spent \$30,000 and October 1st was the cut off date for the splash pad. Supervisor Dickson stated the splash pad will be open for a longer period next year. Ms. Straus stated the \$30,000 reflects one quarter of the time the splash pad was open, and they are still waiting for the 2nd quarter. Supervisor Dickson stated it costs more to use fresh water, but it is much healthier.

Councilman Bauer stated there is a need for shaded seating and a vending machine at the splash pad and suggesting adding \$5,000 - \$6,000 to the Repair and Maintenance line item.

Recreation Department

Supervisor Dickson stated Recreation Supervisor Masset submitted a proposal for adding a full time person to the department. Ms. Masset cited problems recruiting since 2019, there is not a leader that can plan or implement programs, need an experienced individual capable of overseeing teenage employees.

Supervisor Dickson stated the hiring would happen in the spring and the salary listed is only three quarters of the salary for the Group 3, Step 1 position.

Councilman Piekarec asked if the employee would hold the required certifications to oversee the pool, ice rink, and summer camp. Ms. Masset stated she is going to ask that they do hold all the certifications to run the NYS Department of Health Children's Camp which would carryover to ice rink leadership; this would be an afternoon and evening shift.

Councilman Bauer asked if this person could train the lifeguards. Ms. Masset stated this would be a good idea; the town currently partners with the Continuing Education Department for lifeguard training.

Supervisor Dickson stated this is a civil service position and the duties must fall within the job description.

Buildings and Grounds – Ice Rink

Supervisor Dickson stated the Repair and Maintenance was increased. Highway Superintendent Adams stated they are rebuilding compressors and addressing other general maintenance issues.

Veteran's Swimming Pool

No comments or questions were received.

Buildings & Grounds – Pool

No comments or questions were received.

Cultural Center – (Maintenance to the Burchfield Center and the Metz House)

Councilman Bauer stated he would like more money budgeted for the Burchfield Nature and Arts Center. Councilman Hanley stated part of his proposal for the ARP funding is for repair and maintenance for this building.

Highway Superintendent Adams stated the roof at the Metz house is completed and agrees more should be budgeted for this line.

Historian

No comments or questions were received.

Historical Property

No comments or questions were received.

Celebration

Councilman Hanley stated he would like to reduce the line by \$7,000 as it is only a beer tent. Councilman Cantafio asked what the \$7,500 covers. Supervisor Dickson stated it covers the fireworks.

Senior Center

Supervisor Dickson stated Director of Senior Services Stanek requested an increase for the Fitness Consultant based on demand.

Buildings & Grounds – Senior Center

No comments or questions were received.

Zoning Board, Planning Board, Ethics Committee, Citizens Budget Committee, Historical Conservation Committee, and Environmental Committee

Councilman Piekarec stated many committees are run without a paid secretary and would like a board member to take over the role of secretary for the Ethic's Board. Supervisor Dickson asked Town Clerk Kobler how good the volunteers' minutes are. Clerk Kobler stated they are not good; they do not follow a format and many times contain grammatical errors. The Ethics Board could subpoena people, adding additional work to the secretary.

Sanitation and Recycling Department

Supervisor Dickson stated the Laborers – Part-time line budget reflects the minimum wage increase of \$0.70 per hour. Highway Superintendent Adams stated this line is generally under funded and the department is still dealing with Covid quarantines and would like it to be closer to \$200,000. Supervisor Dickson requested written justification.

Councilman Bauer stated as of September 30th the part-time labor cost was \$153,000 and by the end of the year it will be around \$204,000. Supervisor Dickson stated he would like to know what attempts have been

made to reduce this and would like a detailed proposal or he would like to reduce the number of part-time laborers, possibly utilizing the full time laborers instead of them leaving early.

Supervisor Dickson asked Mr. Adams when a resident is charged to replace a tote. Mr. Adams stated unless a tote is damaged by a town employee or equipment residents are charged for replacing or adding totes at their property.

Councilman Bauer noted \$23,000 has been spent from this line so far.

Drainage Districts

No comments or questions were received.

Tree Maintenance

No comments or questions were received.

Disaster Preparedness

No comments or questions were received.

Employee Benefits

Supervisor Dickson stated the workers compensation is lower but extra was put in the reserves.

Councilman Bauer referred to the September 30th year to date report and observed only 25% of the line item has been used and asked how the payment works. Ms. Straus stated the town will receive the bill due December 15, 2021, for 2021 of 75%, the 25% is a pre-pay for the following year. NYS functions on a different fiscal year than the town. Supervisor Dickson stated the market did very well this year which lowers the town's contribution.

Councilman Bauer asked why the Blue-Collar retirement increased so much. Supervisor Dickson stated that is for anticipated retirements and employees buying back their sick leave.

Debt Service

Supervisor Dickson referred to the third line down and stated this was to balance the budget in 2019 which will be compensated with ARP funds.

Transfers

Supervisor Dickson stated this is accounting for the playgrounds and sanitation trucks. Other reserves – workers compensation and retirement – are volatile and change every year and this is to build reserves. Councilman Piekarec asked if there was a limit on how much can be taken out of the fund. Supervisor Dickson stated there is not, but there is a limit on how much can be put in and what it can be used for.

Supervisor Dickson noted the Capital fund is for buildings and again is providing for reserves.

Councilman Hanley stated he would like to reduce the Transfer to Retirement line to \$25,000 due to the anticipated good year. Supervisor Dickson stated this is an effort to build up a reserve and would like to contribute \$50,000 every year to create a buffer for bad years.

Councilman Hanley stated he would like to reduce the Transfer Capital Reserve by \$15,000.

Estimated Revenues

Supervisor Dickson stated In Lieu of Taxes decreased, this is not controlled by the town. The sales tax, Non Property Revenue, is based on continuing the trend of 2017, 2018, and 2019 amounts and similarly the Mortgage Tax amount was also determined this way.

HIGHWAY AND SPECIAL DISTRICTS FUNDS

Director of Finance Alissa Straus gave the attached power point presentation on the proposed 2022 Highway Fund and 2022 tentative benefit Basis Budget.

Highway Fund

Supervisor Dickson refereed to the general repairs in the Highway Fund and reiterated the town will be using \$140,000 from the ARP funding to double the amount of blacktop paving and is planning to increase this next year using General Fund money.

Supervisor Dickson stated he has already spoken about his reduction in laborers and asked Highway Superintendent Adams to comment.

Mr. Adams stated he is not looking to gain more than the amount the department has previously had and reducing his count by two more is going to negatively impact services. Mr. Adams referred to the many comparisons made between West Seneca and Cheektowaga and stated West Seneca is very different as the departments work hand in hand with each other. Many extra projects are completed that benefit the town. Mr. Adams listed the separate departments and payrolls for Cheektowaga and stated these are not broken out in West Seneca and the duties and coverage overlap. Mr. Adams stated his department is a bare minimum now and further reduction is going to be detrimental.

Supervisor Dickson stated the Highway Funds are for highways and the town does not cost the labor appropriately. The Town Board has a responsibility to the taxpayers and would like to see a detailed reason for the additional employees. Supervisor Dickson asked Mr. Adams why West Seneca has the highest costs in the area and stated he would like to do a thorough analysis.

Mr. Adams stated some factors affecting the numbers for other towns would be they are broken down into towns and villages, and some towns do not plow their own roads.

Mr. Adams asked if moving Sanitation into the Highway Fund would be beneficial as the departments are blended. Supervisor Dickson stated he did not believe it was legal.

Councilman Piekarec asked how many other towns run two people in a plow truck. Mr. Adams stated Tonawanda and Cheektowaga operate in the same way as West Seneca and they also use a brine with salt. Additionally, Tonawanda just purchased new road paving equipment and are far more advanced.

Councilman Bauer stated the scope of work the Highway Department performs is comingled with Buildings and Grounds and Police Department vehicles; none of the costs are transferred into those departments and agrees the budget should be scrutinized. Mr. Adams stated there is a budget line for repairs, but the labor is not accounted for, and Cheektowaga's eight mechanics only service their highway vehicles.

Councilman Hanley suggested charging time to other departments when doing work for them and asked if the Police Department calls plow drivers in when the roads are bad. Mr. Adams states the Highway Department makes the ultimate call to bring people in and reiterated the Highway Department operates and supplements other departments.

Mr. Adams asked if the anticipated retirements do not happen will they be over budget and is there a contingency for this. Supervisor Dickson stated they are looking at the past retirement pattern and there are funds that can make up for it. Councilman Piekarec stated two retirements this year would be a decent prediction.

Snow Removal (Town Highways)

Councilman Hanley stated he would like to reduce the overtime line by \$10,000. Supervisor Dickson stated if the winter is mild the money can be transferred to another line.

Employee Benefits

Councilman Bauer referred too the significant reductions in the State Retirement and Workers' Compensation lines and asked if the trend will continue. Supervisor Dickson stated it depends on the stock market and is not predictable and this is the reason for building up the reserves.

Debt Service

Supervisor Dickson stated this is locked in and should decrease in future years.

Transfers

Supervisor Dickson stated the \$120,000 is based on the price of two dump truck sized vehicles and this amount is budgeted for future years.

Highway Superintendent asked if line items for grants should be included in the budget. Ms. Straus stated the budget is amended once an amount is awarded.

Revenue

Supervisor Dickson referred to the Appropriated Fund Balance (Deficit Reduction) line and stated unexpected revenue went into the Fund Balance putting the town in a much better position.

Supervisor Dickson asked the Town Board if they have any other thoughts.

Councilman Hanley asked Supervisor Dickson if it was fair that the Supervisor take the in lieu of receiving healthcare because he takes federal healthcare when other employees are not getting raises. Supervisor Dickson asked who Councilman Hanley was referring to. Councilman Hanley stated the Blue-Collar employees. Supervisor Dickson stated they are currently negotiating their contract, and this is how the contract works. Councilman Hanley stated this constitutes a raise and no other elected officials are getting raises. Supervisor Dickson asked what other full time employees should not get benefits. Councilman Piekarec stated he does not think the Town Justices should receive benefits. Councilman Hanley stated Supervisor Dickson is getting a 6% cost of living increase in his federal pension this year. Supervisor Dickson challenged Councilman Hanley's argument and stated he finds this offensive. Councilman Hanley stated when Supervisor Dickson ran for office, he stated he was not going to take benefits. Supervisor Dickson stated he did not run on not taking benefits and in fact at the first organization meeting he proposed every full time person should receive benefits. Councilman Piekarec stated he would like to phase out the in lieu of payments.

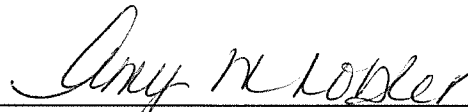
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Councilman Hanley asked if proposed changes should be submitted to Ms. Straus as was done last year. Supervisor Dickson stated that would be reasonable.

Councilman Piekarec asked if the proposed budget will be voted on at the next meeting. Supervisor Dickson confirmed this is the plan as they need to vote before the public hearing.

Motion by Councilman Piekarec, seconded by Councilman Hanley, to adjourn the meeting at 9:33 P.M.



AMY M. KOBLER, TOWN CLERK