

Supervisor Gary Dickson called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

<b>ROLL CALL:</b>	Present	Gary Dickson William Bauer Joseph Cantafio William P. Hanley, Jr. Jeff Piekarec	Supervisor Councilman Councilman Councilman Councilman
	Absent	None	

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

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**BENEFIT BASIS & PRELIMINARY BUDGET**

Motion by Supervisor Dickson, seconded by Councilman Hanley, that proofs of publication and posting of legal notice: "OF A PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER THE 2022 TENTATIVE BENEFIT BASIS BUDGET & 2022 TENTATIVE AD VALOREM BUDGET" in the Town of West Seneca, be received and filed.

Ayes: All                                              Noes: None                                              Motion Carried

Motion by Supervisor Dickson, seconded by Councilman Bauer, to open the public hearing.

Ayes: All                                              Noes: None                                              Motion Carried

Director of Finance Straus gave the attached presentation on the proposed 2022 tentative benefit basis budget and 2022 tentative ad valorem budget.

Supervisor Dickson gave the attached presentation.

Residents had the following comments/questions on the proposed budget:

- ✓ Asked for clarification on the \$650,000 annual cost of the Community Center and Library – Supervisor Dickson stated the amount is the debt service on the loan and the last payment is in 2042.
- ✓ What is the meeting room used for – Supervisor Dickson stated it is the Community Room and is used by many different groups.
- ✓ What was the figure for employee pensions and health insurance costs – Supervisor Dickson stated \$6.1M is budgeted for employee health insurance. Ms. Straus stated employee benefits are \$8,415,000 in the General Fund and out of this about \$3.9M is hospital and medical insurance for current and retired employees.
- ✓ Referred to the proposal of defunding Community Days and suggested the organizers cover the town costs
- ✓ Is Supervisor taking the in lieu of stipend or the healthcare coverage – Supervisor Dickson stated he is taking the cash stipend this year.
- ✓ Referred to the Special Lighting Districts and asked what "EPC" stands for - Supervisor Dickson stated it is the Energy Performance Contract; the town bought the streetlights from NYSEG and put LEDs in them, and this represents the debt for each district.
- ✓ Suggested adding the option to contribute \$1 to restore the Burchfield on tax bills

- ✓ Referred to Councilman Hanley's proposal to defund Community Days and stated the Civic and Patriotic Commission incurs many expenses holding the event – Councilman Hanley stated his proposal was not personal and every other group is paying more for town facilities and services; it was an effort to be fair.
- ✓ Services in West Seneca are the best around, the town has grown, and by cutting employees services will suffer – Supervisor Dickson stated he needs evidence to change his mind. Highway Superintendent Adams stated one discrepancy with comparing West Seneca to the other municipalities is the fact that they also have villages and the populations skew the numbers; more accurately appropriating costs will provide a more balanced picture.
- ✓ Deborah Mueller, CSEA Labor Relations Specialist stated:
  - A deep dive is needed, and numbers can be manipulated to back a particular argument
  - The Blue-Collar Unit is being hammered and is the only unit without a contract in place
  - The Highway Department has not received ARP funds like other departments
  - A truer comparison should include every municipality in Erie County dollar for dollar / service for service

Supervisor Dickson stated he selected the municipalities based on size, the Sanitation Department is not being cut, no other departments are receiving ARP funds or premium pay now; the town is using General Funds to pay off the \$600,000 bond and ARP money is being used to back fill salary lines.

- ✓ Supported maintaining the two positions in the Highway Department and suggesting enhancing services by assigning each Councilmen to a district to work on beautification efforts - Councilman Hanley stated there are tasks that town employees do that the town is not compensated for and maintenance that saves the town money. Supervisor Dickson asked Town Attorney Hawthorne if there are liability issues if town employees do work on another entity's property. Ms. Hawthorne stated that is a concern for the legal department.
- ✓ A resident asked Councilman Bauer the following questions:
  - Do you see where the town may be operating inefficiently
  - Will you commit to supporting a budget with a zero percent increase

Highway Superintendent Adams reiterated the benchmarks being used are not accurate.

Councilman Bauer stated he is in favor of the zero budget increase and the increase he proposed last year was to cover the \$600,000 deficit. Councilman Bauer and Mr. Adams have made a commitment to analyzing the Highway Department's budget.

Supervisor Dickson stated the budget numbers are black and white and the road miles costs are accurate. Further, fixed costs must be cut to secure the town's financial future; cutting two employees will save \$150,000 annually going forward. Supervisor Dickson noted businesses look for consistency and town governments that have costs under control when deciding on a location and is willing to change course if there is adequate justification.

- ✓ Residents also need to be accountable, cannot rely on sanitation employees to make additional pickups
- ✓ Would like the Highway Department to provide justification for numbers and agrees with the idea of revisiting adding people back if necessary
- ✓ Need to invest in parks and beautifying the town
- ✓ Other municipalities deal with flooding issues from creeks and still have lower costs
- ✓ Doing more should not cost more
- ✓ Disagrees with cutting funding for Community Days

- ✓ An HR professional is essential
- ✓ Suggested a citizen committee review the Highway Budget
- ✓ Does not want positions cut but wants to freeze hiring, except for public safety

Highway Superintendent Adams stated the Sanitation Budget, including the recycling contract, is just over \$3M; Tonawanda is \$8.6M, Cheektowaga is \$9.5M, and the very small Village of Depew is just over \$1M. Mr. Adams stated he is sure the Highway Department is not doing things wrong and would like the accounting straightened out as highway workers supplement many other departments.

Councilman Bauer stated Ms. Straus is investigating the capabilities of the current accounting software the town uses. Councilman Bauer also noted the Highway Department is doing more work and there is a need to replace old equipment.

Supervisor Dickson stated he agrees we get great value from the Sanitation Department, but he is always looking for ways to improve.

Supervisor Dickson noted the Town Board received two emails for their review.

Comments unrelated to the budget:

- ✓ A resident asked if the town could do mailings to notify the public about meetings
- ✓ Would like to see the Burchfield repaired
- ✓ The new bike track is extremely popular, but the fence gets ripped down every day
- ✓ The town posts all meetings on the website and follow NYS law; there is an expense to send a mailer and the town is trying to cut expenses

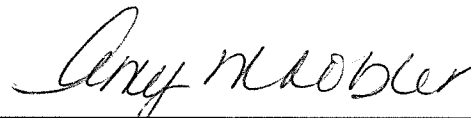
## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Supervisor Dickson, seconded by Councilman Cantafio, to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 P.M.

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried



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**AMY M. KOBLER, TOWN CLERK**