

The Seneca Falls Town Board held a Budget Workshop on Monday, October 11, 2021 in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 130 Ovid Street, Seneca Falls, NY.

Present were Supervisor Michael Ferrara; Councilpersons Dawn Dyson, Douglas Avery, David DeLelys and Steven Churchill. Also present was Richard Stabinsky, Zoning Officer; Deborah Von Wald, Assessor and Beverly Warfel, Senior Account Clerk.

Supervisor Ferrara opened the Budget Workshop at 5:30 P.M. A roll call of Board Members was taken and all were present; the Pledge of Allegiance followed.

Mr. Ferrara stated this is the first of three scheduled Budget Workshops. Tonight, Richard Stabinsky and Deborah Von Wald are here to discuss their budgets. He asked the Board to try and put things in focus. Last week, the Tentative Budget was presented; nothing in it has been changed. Mr. Ferrara said there are things in the budget that have to be discussed. He added the goal of the Board is to reduce landfill revenue out of the operating budget for the next four years.

Mr. Ferrara stated in July, they presented different scenarios of using less landfill revenue in combination with the tax relief fund and taxes. He added other scenarios had major cuts, and the Committee felt it was not their place to cut. The unanimous decision of the Budget Committee was scenario #3 – this was just a suggestion; the Board has the ultimate decision. He mentioned that the Public Hearing on the Budget is November 3rd, and the Budget has to be adopted by November 20th.

Appoint Account Clerk: A motion was made to appoint Patricia Carvalho as a part-time 30 hour a week Account Clerk at \$17.41 per hour and effective October 12, 2021, by Michael Ferrara and seconded by Doug Avery.

Mr. Ferrara stated that he, Mr. Avery and Miss Wright interviewed Ms. Carvalho and she seems very capable and eager. Mr. Avery added that they interviewed three people, and she seemed the most capable and the best fit for that office.

The above motion made by Michael Ferrara and seconded by Doug Avery to appoint Patricia Carvalho as part-time 30 hour a week Account Clerk at \$17.41 per hour was carried 5 ayes, 0 naves.

COVID Testing: Mr. Churchill stated over the weekend, he was hit with a respiratory infection; he lost his sense of taste and smell. He took an at home COVID test which is exactly the same thing they give at the County, and it was negative. He thinks the policy should be that they administer the test here on the job; you don't have to run up to the County, and you get results in 15 minutes. Mr. Churchill said he thinks it's a far more efficient way to do the testing once a week – do it at the job site, and someone would have to observe them doing it. It's the same thing that the County does, except they won't lose an hour of work.

Mr. Ferrara stated he doesn't know how it would be verified by the Town. Mr. Churchill said the Supervisor can do it – it's a 5-minute process. Mr. Avery stated it's an interesting solution. Mrs. Dyson mentioned that the Town would have to purchase the kits. Mr. Churchill said how much does losing an hour of work cost? Mr. Ferrara stated based on his conversations with Attorneys, you can't charge an employee for the test; it's no cost going to the County. Mr. Ferrara stated Mr. Churchill is suggesting the Town pay for the kits. Mr. Churchill noted that they are \$14.00 for two kits. Mr. Ferrara said he is not comfortable with changing it now – he would have to check with Counsel. After brief discussion, Mr. Avery stated he would not like this to hold up the process – go with the policy and it can be amended. Mr. Stabinsky said the policy says testing weekly – for how long; Mr. Ferrara replied until the COVID-19 crisis is considered over based on the CDC and FDA and the Seneca County Health Department.

A motion was made to adopt the attached COVID-19 vaccination and testing policy by Michael Ferrara and seconded by Dawn Dyson. No questions. Motion carried 4 ayes, 1 nay; Councilman Churchill with the dissenting vote.

Mr. Ferrara stated he will check with the Attorneys, and if they say that it will work, the Board can amend the policy.

Mr. Ferrara asked what the Board's feelings are about dealing with things as far as the Department Heads going over their budgets – how long is the Board going to wait to make decisions. Mr. DeLelys suggested that the Board go line by line of their budget and make a decision that night. Mr. Ferrara said he told Department Heads to highlight major changes in their budget. Mr. Avery mentioned with past practice, for the most part, decisions were made right then and there – there may be some large ticketed items that may be decided later on. Brief

discussion followed.

Zoning/Planning:

Page 8 – Safety Inspection: Mr. Stabinsky stated most of the items are pretty much the same as this year. Mr. Ferrara mentioned that there is one big change. Mr. Stabinsky stated the biggest change is to make his position full time. Mr. Stabinsky handed out packets to Board Members which contained the research he did to compare the position with other towns. He mentioned the County Code, and said it's the same schooling and the same aspect of training. He included what the County makes, and then what towns in the area make that are similar to our town. Mr. Avery said what Mr. Stabinsky is asking is to go from 30 hours to full time. Mrs. Dyson asked if we had ever had a full time Code Enforcement; the Clerk responded no, she doesn't believe so.

Mr. Stabinsky stated he wants to be more pro-active with this position; in doing that, it's going to take more time. He said to do it to the Code, they are more aggressive in finding violations. The whole idea of the Zoning Code is to unify the Town. They are involved with current legal aspects, such as dealing with the Indians. Mr. Stabinsky said there is a lot involved. He noted 285 permits have been issued so far this year.

Mr. Ferrara asked if Mr. Stabinsky would be interested in the position going to full time and eliminating the positions of Assistant to the Zoning Officer and Part-time Zoning Officer. The Town Clerk stated with the Assistant Zoning Officer position, that would mean they would handle nothing that pertains to zoning – all permits would go directly to him, as well as Planning and Zoning matters; it would be a lot of added work for the Zoning Officer. Mr. Stabinsky said that position is definitely needed; the Clerk's Office saves me a lot of work and time. Mr. Ferrara stated if Mr. Stabinsky is going from part-time to full time, what more would he be doing to justify the position. He mentioned the part-time Zoning Officer and said that position was for that person to go out in the field because the Zoning Officer didn't have enough time because he was part-time. He added if we go to full time, you can go out in the field yourself – that would justify the position.

Mr. Avery said Kim rose was moved over part-time and also seasonal. What is the change to warrant this to full time – part of it is missing. Mr. Ferrara mentioned that they were put on because things were being neglected. The biggest thing is checking on projects that require permits – it affects all the town taxpayers; a lot of this is going on. Brief discussion followed.

Mr. Churchill stated this is Mr. Stabinsky's first year for this position. He said we should test it another year with Mr. Stabinsky at the helm to see if we can get it done with a part-time position. He suggested keeping the seasonal position for next year, and see what the fallout is. He is in favor of keeping it the way it is for a year; the Board can re-visit it at any time. To him, it makes sense - if we want to keep the budget in control, this is one of the things we have to do. He suggested leaving it as a part-time position for now.

Mr. Ferrara told Mr. Stabinsky that it was nothing personal – he does a great job. He said a while ago, he brought it to the Board's attention to combine the position with the Assessor - the Board did not want to do that. He added Mrs. Von Wald suggested it - at the time, she said she would do it if they couldn't find anybody. She told Mr. Ferrara she would do it for \$20,000 more; it came back at \$15,000 - she would not do it for that. Further discussion followed.

Mr. Avery stated he would recommend holding off on advancing this position to full time. Mr. DeLelys said he agrees with Mr. Churchill – he is comfortable leaving it as it is. Mr. Churchill stated he is comfortable now to make a decision to leave it as it is. Mr. Ferrara said he would like to review the report Mr. Stabinsky handed out and hold off until October 25th.

The part-time Zoning Officer position and salary was discussed. Mr. Churchill proposed zeroing out the part-time seasonal Zoning Officer position this year and trying it. Mrs. Warfel noted Mrs. Rose's salary is split – one-half under Assessment and one-half under Zoning. Mrs. Rose stated she works April 1st to November 1st in the Zoning Office, and after November 1st, she works full time in the Assessor's Office. Mr. Avery said so this is not the seasonal person – there is no seasonal person. Mr. Ferrara said when Mrs. Von Wald offered to make her part-time in the Assessor's Office, the Board agreed to make her part-time in the Zoning Office so that she would remain full time. Mr. Churchill said we have to cut – we can always add back. He added if we need to add people later because it's not working, we can. Mr. Avery stated he agrees that we need to cut the budget, but he doesn't agree to cut this position. After further discussion, Mr. Churchill said he put it out there, and if the Board doesn't want to cut the position it stays.

The Clerk stated she had an estimate to update the Code with the local laws – between \$2,665 and \$3,235. This needs to be put in the Budget because it has not been updated since 2018-2019. Mr. Stabinsky mentioned that

there was \$1,800 in the line item for Zoning Book (A8010.406) which was not spent. That line item was zeroed out. The Town Clerk suggested that \$3,500 be put in line item A8010.415 – Zoning Book Changes, for the Code Book updates. After discussion relative to the Zoning Book changes and the cost, the Board decided to put \$3,500 in the line item for Zoning Book Changes (A8010.415).

Under A3620.202 – Computer, that line item was reduced to zero, and the line item for Education (A8010.404) was reduced from \$1,200 to \$800. Mr. Stabinsky said he has been taking a lot of online classes. He mentioned that the Planning and Zoning Members have to have at least 4 hours of training a year, so that will come out of that line item; \$800 should be enough.

Mr. Ferrara said since Zoning now has a truck, there will be no more mileage. The line item for Mileage – A8010.405 will be changed to Fuel which will cover fuel and repairs for the truck. Mr. DeLelys asked Mr. Stabinsky how much will he need for fuel and repairs. Mr. Stabinsky replied take the \$500 from Vehicle Maintenance (A3620.203) and zero that line item out, and the \$300 that was for mileage, and put it into the line item for Fuel (A8010.405) - \$800 was put into the line item for Fuel.

There were no changes in the Planning Board budget line items.

Assessor:

Mrs. Von Wald stated this year, she had to buy a new printer, so she said reduce the line item for Equipment (A1355.200) to \$1,200. She raised Office Supplies to \$2,500 because of the reval, but when she looked at 2020 and 2021, she thinks she can reduce that to \$1,000 even with the reval. The line item for Office Supplies (A1355.403) was reduced to \$1,000.

Mrs. Von Wald referred to Postage (A1355.404) and said that could be the same as this year at \$1,000. She said Mileage (A1355.407) remains the same as last year; she will be on the road a lot for reval. Education (A1355.408) was reduced to \$600, as she does a lot of online classes.

Mrs. Von Wald referred to the line item for Maintenance Contracts (A1355.409), and said she has a contract with Image Mate from SDG. Last year, she had a Verizon card with \$600 fee which she cut out last year because she doesn't need it. The Image Mate software is the same software the County has; it hasn't been updated since Mrs. Loncosky was here – to her, she doesn't need it. She added the only time she used it is when the Town Clerk or Miss Howell requested property searches for HPC, Planning or Zoning. The cost was about \$3,500 a year. Mrs. Von Wald said you can go on the County website and get the same information. The Town Clerk explained that when an application comes in for the Planning or Zoning Board for site plan, a fence, etc., they have to sent notices to residents within 500 feet or 100 feet within the former Village limits. Mrs. Dyson asked how would you get an update. Mrs. Von Wald replied they have to come here, and because they can't get into the IT Rom, they can't do it. Mr. Churchill suggested getting the information from the County. Mrs. Von Wald said she didn't know if Lisa Keshel has a mapping system, but she doesn't use it for anything as far as assessment purposes go. Further discussion followed.

Mr. Ferrara asked who puts the updates into her software; Mrs. Von Wald replied SDG is the only one that can do that. Mr. Churchill said the bottom line is we don't need to pay \$3,500 if we aren't getting the updates; take \$3,500 out of that line item (A1355.409). Mr. Ferrara asked if we would still be able to get a map of a specific location. Mrs. Von Wald said she wouldn't be able to do that. Mr. Ferrara said would we still be able to get a map of a specific location; Mrs. Von Wald replied they have maps. Mr. Ferrara said this will eliminate the software – we can't do that. Mrs. Dyson said if we pay \$3,500, why can't we have someone come here and update it; Mrs. Von Wald replied they tried to do that. She said the County has the software; maybe we can ask them to add this and give them \$500. She added this can be put on hold until she discusses this with the County – the County updates the program 2-3 times a year with SDG.

Under MLS Membership (A1355.415), Mrs. Von Wald said to take out the \$1,200 because she uses Homestead.net.

The Board discussed the line item for Reval (A1355.416). Mrs. Von Wald stated it will probably be \$1,000 to train her; it will cost \$198,000 with her doing parcels. She said the reval will help. She sends out the sales - almost every sale that hits her desk is way above the assessed value, such as a home on Leland Drive which sold for \$289,000 and is assessed for \$174,000. Mrs. Von Wald said we need to balance the role which will drop the tax rate.

Mr. Churchill stated the market now is doing things that it never did. He asked if this is the time to do a reval

when this is going on. He said it seems that when you have such a volatile market it's not the time to do a reval. Mrs. Von Wald said she raised the roll substantially last year; it was a lot of work and a lot of value.

Mr. Ferrara asked what changed between July and today. The Board voted unanimously to do a reval in July – what changed now. Mr. Avery asked if the reval process takes into account the temporary fluctuations of the market as a whole. Mrs. Von Wald said when she first took the position, the equalization rate was 82%; in two years, it went to 80%. Discussion followed.

Mr. Avery said when they were talking reval, there was quite a difference in price, whether they did it all or the Assessor did it all. He asked if this is the best deal we can get. Mrs. Von Wald replied he will lower the bill based on what I can contribute. Mr. Ferrara said the cost was not to exceed \$198,000.

Mrs. Von Wald stated the last reval was in 2015 and it hit the roll in 2016. The State didn't like the land vaules so they almost threw it out. The rule of thumb is every three to five years, a reval should be implemented just to make things equal for all people.

Mr. Churchill stated the Pandemic changed everything and continues to change everything. He doesn't think we should do a reval until things settle down – it's too unstable. Mrs. Von Wald said there is one way to go around it – go Countywide assessment. Mr. DeLelys said he agrees with Mr. Churchill – it's a bad time for a reval. He added the way things are going up because of the Pandemic, we don't want to raise taxes anymore than we have to. Mr. Ferrara said how do you propose not raising taxes if you want to eliminate landfill revenue over the next four years out of the operating budget. Mr. DeLelys said cut the budget like they are doing now.

After further discussion, Steve Churchill made a motion, seconded by Dave DeLelys, to set the Reval (A1355.416) line item to zero, and re-visit it next year.

Mr. Ferrara said you have to look at the big picture – the big picture is how much money is it costing the Town without a reval – it's way bigger than \$200,000. Mr. Churchill said he understands that revals are necessary, but the market is so volatile right now – it's the wrong time to do a reval; it doesn't make sense.

The above motion made by Steve Churchill and seconded by Dave DeLelys to zero out the line item for Reval and not do the reval in 2022 was carried 4 ayes, 1 nay; Supervisor Ferrara with the dissenting vote.

Being there was no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the Budget Workshop by Michael Ferrara and seconded by Dawn Dyson. No questions. Motion carried 5 ayes, 0 naves.

Meeting adjourned at 7:09 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

NICALETTA J. GREER
Town Clerk