

Mr. Ferrara stated the Board had about eight days to look over the Budget and to digest the comments of the people. He reminded the Board that the Budget has to be adopted by November 20th. Hopefully, some action can be taken tonight; if not, some action will have to be taken before the 20th or the Preliminary Budget becomes the official adopted Budget.

Mr. Churchill said he believes you have to play the hand your dealt. Seneca Falls is holding a hand that has five years involved, and that is the closing of the Landfill. Closing the Landfill today would mean we would not get approximately \$3 million a year – we will get that for the next five years. Mr. Churchill said the Board is looking to put \$1.8 million of that into the Operating Budget. We can't continue that way because in year six, it's gone and we will be \$1.8 million short.

Mr. Churchill stated there are five Budget cycles left before the closing of the Landfill. He suggested raising taxes incrementally for the next five years to whittle away that \$1.8 million (if everything stays the same), so that in 2026, that Board can make a budget with just revenues taken in and without the dump money. Mr. Churchill said that's the Board's responsibility – that's the reality, and he believes that's why he was elected.

Mr. Churchill said currently, we are at a little over \$10.00 per \$1,000, lower than most surrounding communities if not all that have equivalent services. He proposed the following:

- Take \$300,000 from the Tax Stabilization Fund.
- Increase taxes by \$425,000, less than the 2% tax cap, and it equates to \$1.00 per \$1,000.
- Take the balance from the Landfill money.

Mr. Churchill said the Board should do the same thing for the next five years, and this should get it down to where we don't need Landfill money because there won't be any.

A motion was made by Steve Churchill and seconded by Doug Avery to take \$300,000 from the Tax Stabilization Fund; increase taxes by \$425,000; and take the balance from Landfill revenue to balance the 2021 Budget.

Mr. Ferrara stated the Landfill contribution to the Operating Budget would be about \$990,000. Mr. Avery said if we do this extra \$425,000, it doesn't go away. It becomes something we can allocate for the future or put it into an infrastructure project for highway, or the roof on the Community Center. It could also be putting money into Vince's Park which he supports. He said it frees up that money and it just doesn't disappear – it gets used. Mr. Avery stated by 2025, the Board needs to have our infrastructure in as good a shape as possible. He added for every \$1.00 the Board uses to keep taxes low, it keeps the Board from doing something that the Town needs. Brief discussion followed.

Mr. Ferrara said he is not in favor of raising taxes in the middle of the worst pandemic in the history of our Country. He mentioned that 40% of the stores downtown are vacant and our businesses are operating at a minimum of 50%, and might be operating at 25% in the near future as our numbers continue to go up. Mr. Ferrara said in this climate, there is no need to raise taxes – we don't have to raise taxes as we have the resources. There are many people in our Community who are struggling now in the middle of this crisis. Mr. Churchill said COVID is a crisis and it's terrible, but it doesn't change the hand we are holding. We can't wait until 2025 to fix the problem – we have to start today with this Budget cycle. He added we have five budget cycles left, and if we don't start with this one, we are not being responsible electors to this Community. Further discussion followed.

Mr. DeLelys said he thinks the Board should start with a Committee next year. He recommended passing the Preliminary Budget as it is now, and look at some of Mr. Churchill's ideas next year.

Mr. Avery stated there seems to be an impression that this Town can get by on a \$10.00 tax rate, and we can't. There is no community around us that has the same services, programs and infrastructure that we have that gets by on less than twice that. Mr. Avery said to perpetuate that \$10.00 is a norm year after year simply means when it does catch up it makes it that much harder. He added this is what we should do now to make the pain a little less later on. Lengthy discussion followed.

A roll call vote was taken on the above motion made by Steve Churchill and seconded by Doug Avery to take \$300,000 from the Tax Stabilization Fund, increase taxes by \$425,000, and take the balance from the Landfill revenue to balance the 2021 Budget:

Michael Ferrara – no Steve Churchill – yes

Dave DeLelys – yes Dawn Dyson – no

Doug Avery – yes

Motion carried 3 ayes, 2 nays; Mr. Ferrara and Mrs. Dyson with the dissenting votes..

Mrs. Warfel noted that the Town is under the 2% tax cap. She said the tax rate will go from \$8.76 per \$1,000 to \$9.76 per \$1,000 in the General Fund, and stays at \$1.29 for the Highway Fund (tax rate will be \$11.05).

The Board reviewed the following:

- Vince’s Park stays the same – Park and pool open. The Board voted on this earlier.
- It’s a Wonderful Life Museum stays at \$7,000.
- Visitors Center – Mr. Ferrara said Mr. Churchill earlier made a motion to fund the Visitors Center at \$108,000 which passed. After discussion, a motion was made by Michael Ferrara and seconded by Steve Churchill to fund the Visitors Center at \$120,000, the same level as 2020.

Lengthy discussion followed relative to the funding of the Visitors Center, the growth of tourism and the financial impact on the Community.

A roll call vote was taken on the above motion made by Michael Ferrara and seconded by Steve Churchill to fund the Visitors Center at \$120,000, the same level as 2020:

Michael Ferrara – yes Steve Churchill – yes
 Dave DeLelys – yes Dawn Dyaon – no
 Doug Avery – yes

Motion carried 4 ayes, 1 nay; Mrs. Dyson with the dissenting vote.

A motion was made to adopt the 2021 Preliminary Budget with changes made this Evening by Steve Churchill and seconded y Doug Avery.

Mr. Avery said so the tax rate will be \$11.05 with the Highway; Mrs. Warfel replied yes, but with the changes the Board just made, it’s going to impact it a little bit.

A roll call vote was taken on the above motion made by Steve Churchill and seconded by Doug Avery to adopt the 2021 Preliminary Budget with changes made this Evening:

Michael Ferrara – no Steve Churchill – yes
 Dave DeLelys – yes Dawn Dyson – no
 Doug Avery – yes

Motion carried 3 ayes, 2 naves; Mr. Ferrara and Mrs. Dyson with the dissenting votes.

Kyle Black asked what the tax rate is going to be for 2021; Mr. Ferrara replied \$1.00 per \$100,000. Mr. Black said to make sure the public knows what the tax rate increase is going to be next year. He asked what the percentage is; Mrs. Warfel replied overall, it will be less than the 2% tax cap. Brief discussion followed.

Mr. Ferrara thanked Mrs. Warfel for all her hard work during the Budget process, and thanked the Town Clerk for all her hard work in all these Special Meetings. He also thanked those who participated in the process.

Being there was no further business, a motion mas made to adjourn the Meeting by Steve Churchill and seconded by Dawn Dyson. No questions. Motion carried 5 ayes, 0 naves.

Meeting adjourned at 6:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

NICALETTA J. GREER
 Town Clerk

