

The Seneca Falls Town Board held a Budget Workshop on Thursday, October 13, 2022 in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 130 Ovid Street, Seneca Falls.

Present were Supervisor Michael Ferrara; Councilpersons Frank Sinicropi, Steven Churchill, Dawn Dyson and Kaitlyn Laskoski. Also present were Stuart Peenstra, Police Chief; Timothy Snyder, Police Lieutenant; Mary Jones, Interim Recreation Director and Peter Soscia, Town Manager.

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 the tax rate in the Tentative Budget is \$10.18 per \$1,000, up about .10 for former Village residents and .06-.07 up for Town residents. He heard unofficially that the objective is to lower taxes. Mrs. Dyson commented that she would like to see the tax rate at least stay the same. Mr. Sinicropi said he is for lowering taxes – he has to figure out how to lower taxes. Mrs. Laskoski said ideally, she would like it lowered, but she doesn't want to see taxes increased. She added the Board should consider the option of staying the same - she certainly doesn't want to cut things because there are too many restrictions.

Mr. Ferrara said there is nothing wrong with a small increase in taxes every year. He added if you lower taxes, then your tax cap level decreases next year, which means you have less of a margin next year when you look at the tax cap. Mr. Sinicropi mentioned that the appropriations increased 37% - is this over the tax cap. Mr. Ferrara replied no.

Mr. Ferrara stated based on the recommendations of the Auditors, they have allocated the entire Landfill revenue in the Budget; \$3.4 million is allocated in the Budget. Mr. Sinicropi noted last year, \$2.8 million was allocated – it's up 8%.

Mr. Soscia stated in this Budget, there is about \$350,000 to cover 100% of our HRA allocations. He did this on the advice of the Auditors – the Budget has to account for the worst case. He thinks expenditures will be less than \$100,000. He added because we don't have the ability to have budget actuals, he gravitated to the worst case. Mr. Ferrara stated based on his email to the Board, they are lining up an accounting firm to come in maybe next week – we have to figure out what we have spent.

Mr. Ferrara stated there is no guarantee that Seneca Meadows will be in operation past 2025. The Board is going to have to decide how much money it wants to spend out of the reserve fund. Lengthy discussion followed relative to the unrestricted fund and the tax relief fund.

#### Public Safety:

The Police Department is requesting to replace two marked cars and one unmarked car. Chief Peenstra stated he gave the Board a flow chart as to how their vehicles are being used. They run 12 hours a day, and it is recommended that they sit for 12 hours. Mr. Sinicropi went through the process of trying to figure out how many vehicles are needed for rotation. Mr. Ferrara asked if most law enforcement agencies basically rotate their cars as we do; Chief Peenstra replied yes – we are not any different than other agencies.

Chief Peenstra stated they have four unmarked and seven marked vehicles - this is the fleet they have had for years. They have a 2014 vehicle that is ready to be replaced. He feels they can get a good return when it's sold. Lengthy discussion followed regarding leasing of vehicles, the cost of leasing and the cost of retrofitting the new vehicles.

Chief Peenstra stated he is requesting one additional Officer that he would mainly like to assign to narcotics and who will be working with the Seneca County Sheriff's Department, as well as fill vacancies in road patrol at times. He said most of the time, this Officer would be restricted to Seneca Falls. There are homes that have constant drug users and sellers. He mentioned that the State Police doesn't have the staff to work this area. The Chief said the County has two employees that are tied up on investigations and cannot work this area. He would be remiss if we didn't put this in the Budget to address this issue. The Chief said this Officer would be 80% assigned to Informants and specialized assignments. Chief Peenstra stated this Officer would be in plain clothes, working with Informants and working with the Seneca County Drug Team.

The number of Officers was discussed. Mr. Ferrara said one of their employees has been on Workers Compensation, and they are doing everything in their power to get it settled. Hopefully, it will come to some resolution in the next few months. Mr. Sinicropi referred to the two Investigators, and asked if their services can be reallocated until the Workers Compensation case is settled. Chief Peenstra mentioned that the two



Investigators are backlogged with cases, and he wouldn't want to pull them off those cases.

Mrs. Laskoski asked – how many Officers are they down? Chief Peenstra replied they are one down, and there are three at the Police Academy – one is done November 4<sup>th</sup> and two the first part of January. Then they have 16 weeks of field training – it's a process. He added they will be asking to send 2-3 to the Law Enforcement Academy – one to replace a current vacant spot and one to replace a potential retirement in June. Also, one to replace the possibility of a Lieutenant. Brief discussion followed.

Mr. Ferrara asked if the Board wanted more time to think about it, keep the requests in the Budget or by majority, say it's going away. Further discussion followed relative to leasing cars.

A motion was made by Michael Ferrara and seconded by Kaitlyn Laskoski to fund the extra Officer and fund the vehicles, and the \$245,000 increase will stay in the Budget. No questions. Motion carried 5 ayes, 0 nays.

#### Parks & Recreation:

Mr. Ferrara stated there is nothing drastic that is above and beyond the normal budget. There is just a small increase that is related to salary increases, energy, etc. He asked if there were any questions for Mrs. Jones. Mr. Sinicropi said if the Highway gets a new pickup truck and the one they have is better than the one the Rec has, can it be moved to the Recreation Center. Mr. Ferrara replied yes. Mrs. Jones mentioned that Mr. Passalacqua's old vehicle is costing a lot of money to get it running; the salt truck has a lot of issues as well.

Mrs. Jones stated \$6,000 was taken out for the Ventrax which needs to be put back in. Mr. Sinicropi asked if we are good with the pool next year. Mrs. Jones replied the only thing we have to fix is to take care of the floor of the pool – she can't get anyone to come in and patch it. She added the other things are not big ticketed items. Brief discussion followed.

Mrs. Jones said the only other thing is the fence in the A Fund. Mr. Ferrara noted there is a \$7,000 increase left in the Budget for the line item for fence. He added this is for the fence in Academy Square. He mentioned the other thing is the Arch going up the hill and said the sign is very historic; it came from Restvale Cemetery.

Salaries were discussed. Mr. Ferrara stated there is a 5% increase for wages in the Budget for next year; does the Board want to stay at 5%. Mr. Churchill asked what are other folks in the area getting. Mr. Ferrara replied he didn't know – he can only compare with the County who most are getting 8%. After brief discussion, the Board agreed to leave salary increases at 5%.

Discussion followed relative to salary adjustments for some employees that are made during the year.

#### Town Justice:

Mr. Ferrara stated there is an increase in the two Court Clerks' salaries which is a \$14,000 increase, but there is a \$20,000 elimination because we will not be hiring a part-time Clerk.

#### Supervisor:

In the Supervisor's Budget, Mr. Ferrara said \$5,000 is funded to transfer to a payroll processing company. He and Mr. Soscia have been doing some research, and for \$5,000 we can outsource payroll. He added by doing that, you are not relying on one person to do the payroll. He said it will take care of all the filing, all the deductions, all the W-2s, etc. Mrs. Dyson said we just gave Miss Wright more money. Mr. Soscia said it doesn't mean she would not have work to do. Mr. Ferrara said somebody has to input the payroll data – she will still have some responsibilities. The question was asked if this went out to bid or RFPs. Mr. Ferrara said it is not required – for any professional service, it is not required by law.

Data Processing: Mr. Ferrara stated under Data Processing, there is a \$30,000 increase in the IT Fund which can be eliminated. The Agreement with the County will continue through 2023.

Dog Control: Dog Control was left out of the Budget; the \$15,000 has been put back in the Budget.

#### Safety Inspection:

Mr. Ferrara referred to the line items for Safety Inspection, and said there is a \$14,000 increase to create a full time Zoning Officer. Mr. Porcelli is a 30-hour employee, and they would like to move him to full time. Mrs.

Dyson asked why move him to full time when Mrs. Rose helps him part-time. Mr. Ferrara replied Mrs. Rose helps him from April to October, and most of the time she is in the field doing inspections and looking for those doing work without permits. He added there is a lot of building permits that will be coming down the road with DRI – it will require a lot of time for the Zoning Officer. We are also looking at some housing development in the near future, hopefully. He added we are looking at eliminating the Deputy Zoning Officer. The Town clerk asked who will be doing all the work. Mr. Ferrara said there will still be the Deputy Clerk who will be doing that. He told the Town Clerk her stipend for that will be eliminated. The Town Clerk asked why, and Mr. Ferrara said there is no need for a full time Zoning Officer and an Assistant. The Town Clerk mentioned everything that has to do with zoning that comes through her Office, and said if this happens, her Office will not have anything to do with zoning. After discussion between Mr. Ferrara and Town Clerk, the Town Clerk said she will be discussing this with Mr. Porcelli because he doesn't realize how much work is involved. Mr. Ferrara told the Clerk to have the discussion with Mr. Porcelli and this will be revisited next week. The full time position for Zoning Officer was also tabled.

Law: Mr. Sinicropi asked about the \$40,000 increase in the line item for Litigation/Possible Litigation. Mr. Churchill asked why the increase when the Board decided not to go into litigation. Mr. Ferrara mentioned that the Town can be sued – no one can predict what will happen. He added we don't know how much money we spent this year on legal fees. Mr. Churchill said if that happens, it can be taken out of Contingency – that's what it's for. Mr. Ferrara said it can be taken out.

Sidewalks: Mr. Ferrara referred to Sidewalks, and said there is \$300,000 in the Budget for construction of sidewalks - it was just a thought. He added there are many sidewalks that are in disrepair. Another way to do it is to put more money into the Sidewalk repair program. Brief discussion followed.

Contribution – North Seneca Ambulance: The North Seneca Ambulance request was discussed. Mr. Ferrara stated North Seneca Ambulance is going to all the towns looking for money. He met with them, and the bottom line is we are the largest town and have the most calls. Their reimbursement coming from Medicare is nowhere near what the actual cost of running the ambulance is. Mr. Ferrara said they are fine right now and are financially stable for next year – they are looking for stabilizing their future. He added they gave the number of \$150,000 based on the number of calls that come from Seneca Falls. Mr. Sinicropi said he checked with the Attorney who said the Board just can't give an organization money unless we have an agreement with them. After further discussion, Mr. Ferrara asked if the Board had any thoughts. Mrs. Laskoski said North Seneca Ambulance should do some fundraising. Mr. Churchill suggested the Board give it more thought. Mrs. Laskoski suggested tabling this, and the Board agreed.

Mr. Churchill asked if it was possible to clean the Budget up – there are a lot of zeroes in a lot of places. Mr. Soscia indicated that he will try to do that.

Since there was no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the Budget Workshop by Kaitlyn Laskoski and seconded by Dawn Dyson. No questions. Motion carried 5 ayes, 0 nays.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

  
NICALETTA J. GREER  
Town Clerk