

The Seneca Falls Town Board held a Budget Workshop on Thursday, October 19, 2023 in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 130Ovid Street, Seneca Falls.

Present were Deputy Supervisor Kaitlyn Laskoski; Board Members Frank Sinicropi, Steven Churchill and Dawn Dyson. Also present were Peter Soscia, Town Manager; Timothy Snyder, Police Chief; Ashley VanDoren and Courtney Andrews, Court Clerks and Mary Jones, Interim Recreation Director.

Deputy Supervisor Laskoski opened the Budget Workshop at 6:01 P.M. A roll call of Board Members was taken, and Supervisor Ferrara was absent from the Meeting; the Pledge of Allegiance followed.

Mrs. Laskoski stated there are a few items from the last Budget Meeting that need to be addressed first. Mr. Soscia started with the September bank statements he gave to the Board. He thinks the current balances are in the \$28 million range; there are a lot of account which are in two different banks. Mr. Soscia said these are unaudited bank accounts because 2022 has not been closed yet, and they have been reconciling 2023.

Mr. Soscia explained the first sheet is a spread sheet the Town has been keeping for multiple years, and it contains what they presumed reserve funds. These monies have been in two different banks, and the Town has been keeping track of these accounts and accrued interest. He worked with the Town Clerk to find records establishing these funds and found two or three. This money is difficult to spend at this time because there isn't documentation. Mr. Soscia suggested that after the Budget process is done, the Board can decide how they want to rework some of these accounts. Mr. Sinicropi said if there is no resolution found, then in January or February, the Board needs to create these accounts or not. Mrs. Dyson asked where does it show the interest collected and how much do we have. Mr. Soscia replied he can give her that – these are just bank statements. He explained where to find the interest in Five Star bank statement.

Mr. Soscia referred to the third account and said that's 3.50% which is what the money market is. He said we need this to be a collateralized account because we have more money than the FDIC will cover if the Bank fails. Mr. Soscia stated there is \$23 million in Five Star now; these accounts will go up as we collect taxes and if the landfill pays us. Mrs. Laskoski asked if we know where the landfill money was placed or distributed. Mr. Soscia replied absolutely not, and there are very few records to indicate that. Landfill revenue had to be put in the budget and show where it is going. Previous Boards and Account Clerks didn't do that so it went into the bank. Mr. Soscia stated we created a risk by not properly recording when and how the landfill money was coming into the budget for many years. These are things they are working on now. Mrs. Laskoski said they talked about developing an oversight committee. Mr. Soscia stated one of the recommendations in the strategic plan was to create a committee that looks at the budget and monitors where the landfill money is going, and works with Boards to create budgets that don't rely on Landfill revenue. Further discussion followed.

Mr. Churchill asked what is the role of Pronexus in this whole thing. Mr. Soscia replied they are closing 2022 and reconciling bank accounts. He said the Board, shortly, will be in better financial stead than it has ever been.

Police

Mrs. Laskoski said Chief Snyder cut \$20,000 out of Equipment (A3120.200). Chief Snyder referred to the drone and stated once the Grant came out, he took some of the equipment he was looking at out. He asked if the Board wanted him to apply for the grant. He talked to other departments in the County that has this program to see how much it would cost to train and license pilots. The Class will be about \$800.00; \$175.00 for each pilot license; and after that it's \$5.00 every three years (about \$1,600 for four Individuals). He said when the grant came up, it's a good opportunity. Mrs. Laskoski said she doesn't see why you should not apply for the grant. Mrs. Dyson agreed with Mrs. Laskoski. Chief Peenstra stated as far as training, they will not be brought in for overtime. He talked it over with the Lieutenant and it would be two Officers, the Chief and the Lieutenant. Mrs. Laskoski said she would like to see more than two officers to get trained. Discussion followed.

Mr. Soscia said \$10,000 was put in the Budget for less lethal pepper ball. The Chief said he took that out to use the reserve fund. Mr. Soscia indicated that it is still in the Budget. Mr. Sinicropi stated when cars are sold, the money has to go back into the General Fund – the money in the reserve fund is not legal. Chief Snyder stated he has the resolution for the reserve fund which was done by Mr. Morrell. Mr. Soscia said if he proposes to buy the drone, you would have to have a Public Hearing and a referendum. Mr. Soscia noted the money has been added into the A3120.200 line, so you don't have to worry about the reserve fund. Discussion followed as the Chief proceeded to explain the less lethal pepper ball, equipment and training necessary.

Chief Snyder stated the total he is looking for when applying for the grant is \$100,258.00 which includes the drone, seven car computers and scanners and the Oscar. Mr. Sinicropi said he is in favor of the body cameras

and car cameras because they could save the Town money in lawsuits. Brief discussion followed.

A motion was made by Dawn Dyson and seconded by Kaitlyn Laskoski authorizing Chief Snyder to apply for the grant for a drone and equipment. No questions. Motion carried.

Mrs. Laskoski referred to line item A3120.104 – Part-time. Mr. Sinicropi said he is in favor of part-time. Chief Snyder said Part-time work is for Court Security so that they are not paying overtime. They are paid from the Court Budget, and that takes that line item down from \$16,000 to \$9,000. Discussion followed.

A motion was made to put part-time in the Budget by Dawn Dyson and seconded by Frank Sinicropi. No questions. Motion carried.

Mr. Churchill stated only \$7,000 was spent on part-time this year so far. \$10,000 is appropriated, so it looks like we could go a little lower. Mrs. Dyson noted Court Security (A1110.107) should be \$9,000 rather than \$8,000. Special Court Security was lowered to \$9,000.

Mr. Sinicropi asked if we are at full staff; Chief Snyder replied full staff is 18 including himself – they are down to 16, and two are still in training. Mr. Sinicropi asked what part-time is paid; Chief Snyder replied \$27.46 an hour. Part-time (A3120.104) was reduced to \$30,000. Court Security was changed back to \$16,000.

Mrs. Laskoski referred to the car cameras, and asked how many incidents were there in 2023 with Individuals. Chief Snyder replied he recalls two incidents. Mrs. Laskoski asked what the cost of the cameras were; Chief Snyder replied all seven cars with five year contract is \$109,000. Mrs. Laskoski said she is having a hard time absorbing that cost. Mr. Sinicropi said for him, it's an insurance policy; it's an expensive policy but it's a good one because if there is an incident, people are suing the police left and right. Mr. Sinicropi stated he doesn't mind spending money on something that is used every day of the week. He has a problem with something that is going to be used maybe ten times (drone). After brief discussion, it was decided to leave the cameras in.

North Seneca Ambulance

Russell Goodman of North Seneca Ambulance gave an overview of North Seneca Ambulance. He said no one volunteers their time – it's pretty much a fully paid and trained staff. With that, expenses have increased quite a bit. Mr. Goodman said it took some time to sort a lot of things out, and their Board determined that things were pretty severe since they were losing \$20,000 a month. He went to the County in February 2023 and the County said it was not going to be a County issue. Mr. Goodman mentioned their audit of 2022 and said Waterloo indicated that as soon as they have their audit, they will have the buy-in for Waterloo.

Mr. Goodman stated they provide 42% of patient contacts in Seneca Falls. He said Mr. Ferrara brought up how it is distributed between the towns based on the number of units; it is \$40.09 per housing unit. Mr. Goodman's biggest concern is if they don't get this money for 2024, they are in a position to have to figure out whether or not they are closing down. They brought in the CGR study which will tell them important things. Mr. Goodman's concern is if they don't fund what they have and lose it, they will have a lot more difficulty in restarting the system. Mr. Sinicropi said once you close, it will stay closed – if you go bankrupt and have to close, you will never start up again. He and Mr. Churchill want to see it on the County tax bill; right now, it can't be done – it's way past the time for the County. He said in 2024, we have to convince the towns and County to put it on the tax bill. Mr. Churchill said it's one County - we have to stop the divide; put it on both the north end and south end, South Seneca Ambulance and North Seneca Ambulance. Mr. Goodman said if you can make it Countywide, it may be a great option. Further discussion followed.

Mrs. Laskoski said her biggest concern is are they going to come back in the future for more money. She agrees with Mr. Sinicropi and Mr. Churchill that the County has to accept responsibility as a whole and put it on tax bills. After lengthy discussion, Mr. Sinicropi suggested to leave the money in the Budget until after we get the audit. Mr. Churchill added budget it and figure it out later.

Court

Mrs. Laskoski stated one of the things brought up is one of the Town Justice wants an increase in pay. She is not in favor of that because one of the reasons is this Individual cited there was one rule or verbiage that indicated that Town Justices are supposed to receive equal pay. However, the verbiage has never been this way, and there are issues and training that this Individual doesn't do and refuses to do. She is not in favor of increase in pay, particularly since the other Town Justice has other responsibilities. Mrs. Dyson said it is in the minutes why there is a difference, and she did speak to him about it. Mrs. Laskoski said does he have reasons why motions are incomplete and sitting in a basket since April. Mrs. Dyson said she did not ask him. Mrs. Laskoski stated these

are problems that 7th Judicial District should be made aware of. After further discussion, Mr. Sinicropi suggested that this can be discussed in Executive Session at the next Meeting. Mr. Churchill suggested waiting a couple of weeks because the Elections may change things. Mr. Churchill questioned why Justice 1 was increased to 10.3% and Justice 2 pay increase is 5.2%. Mr. Soscia said he was brought up to Judge Lafler's salary because he was doing extra duties.

Mrs. Laskoski stated there was discussion about a raise of \$3.50 for the Court Clerks because there is no longer a part-time position. Mr. Sinicropi stated he met with Mr. Soscia and gave him all the salaries. They are going to build a new salary structure up to present. After brief discussion, Mr. Sinicropi said a decision on this cannot be made tonight. There is another Budget Meeting next Thursday, and by then, they will have the salary schedule all built – it's being worked on.

Under Equipment (A1110.200), Court Clerk Adams said Equipment was zeroed out. They are asking for \$1,500 to be put in the Budget – \$1,800 was budgeted last year. In the Office/Computer line, Miss Adams said they are asking that \$2,950 be put in the Budget. Mr. Churchill said the Budget shows that only \$43.50 has been spent up to July. Mr. Soscia stated that the Williamson Law budget is not putting in the information for 2023 because 2022 has not been closed out. Mr. Sinicropi asked what they have spent so far for Office Supplies; Miss Adams said so far, they have spent about \$1,200; they are asking for \$2,950. Mr. Sinicropi asked about the continuing Education Expenses (A1110.405) – is that for both Clerks and Judges? Miss Adams replied yes. Mrs. Laskoski stated Mr. Soscia will have a discussion with the Court to make sure all the numbers are good.

Recreation

Mrs. Laskoski stated the biggest thing here is the Clerk's position (CR7020.102). She asked Mrs. Jones to share about the necessity of this position. Mrs. Jones stated they are at the point now where they are extremely busy. They have different organizations coming in every day, and they are also trying to manage kids all afternoons and evenings. There are so many more programs that it is hard for them to do paperwork and all registrations for the programs and camps. Mrs. Laskoski asked if this is a part-time position; Mrs. Jones replied they are hoping for full time. Mr. Soscia stated his assessment is the skills that are required to manage the children in that facility are important. He added we need to make sure that the people we are hiring are trained.

Mrs. Laskoski asked about the Fitness Room Equipment (CR7140.202). Mrs. Jones replied that is for a treadmill; they may be able to trade one in and get something for it. She added there are about 30 people a day going into the Fitness Room. Mrs. Jones said she put \$5,000 in last year, but never used it. Mr. Sinicropi suggested buying the equipment and encumber the \$5,000 from this year, and reduce the \$10,000 in the Budget to \$5,000.

Mrs. Laskoski asked about the Facility Maintenance (CR7140.208). Mrs. Jones replied that is to replace the Atrium floor - \$15,000 might be on the higher end. Mrs. Jones referred to Contractual Miscellaneous (CR7140.400) and said that is to buy a software program that will help them to streamline all the online sign-ups for programs, camps, facility rentals to pay online. Mr. Churchill asked about the program; Mrs. Jones replied it's called RecDesk and is used by other Recreation facilities. She explained the program which can be used for Vince's Park also. Mrs. Laskoski said she is not opposed to this – it would be much easier to sign up online. Mr. Churchill indicated that he will go down and talk to Mrs. Jones about this.

Summer Play Program (CR7141.400) went from \$4,000 to \$10,000. Mrs. Jones said that is based on the revenue. They started charging \$100 per child; that's to show when they pay out all the money. She noted revenue for this was almost \$12,000. Mr. Soscia noted that \$3,000 will be put in the line item for Senior Lunch (CR7310.401).

Mrs. Jones stated Trane services their equipment on the roof. They no longer want to go up on the roof as they feel it's not safe. They want the Town to put a railing up there; the quote is \$15,000 – they think they may be able to do it for less. Mr. Soscia said 25 years ago when they put the system on the roof, they didn't put the proper railing up – it was not required at that time. That service is at end of life. Mr. Soscia stated he has two people looking at what the next step is for that. He recommends that the Board not put the railing in until we get the quotes. Mr. Sinicropi said that's a one-time cost and it should be paid for with landfill money.

Vince's Park

Mrs. Laskoski asked about the Pool floor. Mrs. Jones stated the pool floor has had a lot of holes in the concrete; probably five years was the last time they had them patched. The quotes to go in and blast and fix is anywhere from \$26,000 to \$33,000. Mr. Sinicropi said if the pool isn't fixed, then it has to shut down. He said we have to fix that pool – it's the biggest money-maker at Vince's Park. Mrs. Jones mentioned that Hamblin Pools is going to buy memberships for those who buy a pool. After discussion, \$33,000 was added to line item CR2-7110.400; total in that line is \$53,000.

Mr. Churchill stated Pool Equipment (CR2-7180.200) jumped 300% - \$2,500 to \$10,000. Mrs. Jones said that is for the pool pump.

Mr. Soscia referred to Ornamental Lighting (A5182.402) in the General Fund, and said that was increased from \$11,000 to \$75,000; they are going to start replacing the ornamental light poles. Mrs. Laskoski asked how many light poles are we going to get for \$75,000. Mr. Soscia replied they are about \$1,200 each - they need to be replaced. Mrs. Laskoski asked if we are going to do a better job of maintaining around the poles - let's spruce it up a little bit. Mr. Soscia replied he did put an extra \$5,000 in Plants and Landscaping. Discussion followed.

Mr. Soscia referred to the fountain in Academy Square (A7110.201), and said the lights are not fixable, and the fountain itself is beyond repair. He got a quote from R.E. Kelley to do everything to make it new and build out the landscaping around it - that's why the \$120,000 is in the Budget. Mr. Churchill suggested holding off a year on that - that's more of a want than a need. Mr. Soscia said the fountain is not working. Mrs. Dyson added it's not a priority. Mrs. Laskoski stated if we can use the DRI money, she would rather not have it come out of this. Mr. Soscia said he would take that money out of the Budget and figure out the DRI stuff.

Mr. Soscia stated he gave the Board a letter from the Visitors Center regarding some repairs they would like to have made - windows that need repairing and some other things. Mr. Sinicropi mentioned that they got a DRI grant for \$110,000. Mr. Soscia said it is not for doing these things - they are not asking for very much. They want the floor in the Boating facility repaired - they are reasonable requests. Discussion followed.

Mr. Soscia referred to the Summary page of the Budget and said he wants to make it clear as to how these things are funded. This Budget reflects a \$1.2 million deficit as it is currently structured, that would be funded through excess funds that we have in the Bank - it's all project stuff. The Water/Sewer fund is about \$600,000-\$700,000 of that. Tax liability is about \$120,000. Mr. Soscia said the Auditors have made it clear that we have too much money in the Tax Stabilization fund. The Board should think about taking \$600,000-\$700,000 out of that. Mr. Churchill mentioned that Water/Sewer are asking for a lot of money for a lot of projects. He is not sure they are going to get them done. Brief discussion followed.

Mrs. Laskoski suggested setting up another Budget Meeting. The Board agreed to hold another Budget Workshop at 5:00 P.M. on Thursday, October 26, 2023. The Workshop will be held at the Community Center since the Zoning Board will be using the Meeting Room.

The Town Clerk stated the Board has to decide on salaries for Elected Officials as she has to put a Notice in the paper. After brief discussion, the Board agreed that the Town Supervisor, Town Councilpersons and Deputy Supervisor will receive an increase of 3.5%.

The Town Clerk stated she talked to Mr. Ferrara and Mr. Soscia about putting in some money and appointing a Sexton for the Cemeteries which would be Kay Irland. If we didn't have Mrs. Irland, our cemeteries would not look as great as they do. She does everything for the cemeteries other than mowing the grass; she suggested \$1,500 a year. Mrs. Laskoski said do the other boards get a stipend. The Town Clerk replied no, but this is different. Mrs. Laskoski said she feels if you do it for one, there should be consideration for others. The Town Clerk said Sexton is different - it's like having a Historian. The Historian is appointed and gets so much a year; the Sexton is appointed yearly also. She added Mrs. Irland does everything for the cemeteries - she gets bids for stones repairs, trees when a tree has to be taken down, and right now, she is working on the Mausoleum as there are leaks around the windows and the ledges are in bad shape. The Town Clerk said she feels she needs something to compensate for her time and efforts. Mr. Churchill said she is asking for \$1,500 a year; the town Clerk said she is suggesting \$1,500 a year. All the cemeteries we have will not look as good if it wasn't for her. Mr. Sinicropi said he doesn't have a problem giving her the \$1,500; Mr. Churchill agreed and Mrs. Laskoski and Mrs. Dyson disagreed. Further discussion followed. Mr. Sinicropi said if the Historian gets \$500 then she should get \$500. The Town Clerk mentioned that she does a lot more than a Historian - she is more physically involved. Mr. Soscia said what are we going to do when Mrs. Irland stops doing it. The Town Clerk responded then we get someone else; you could take someone from the Cemetery Commission.

After brief discussion, a motion was made to appoint Kay Irland as Sexton with a stipend of \$1,500 a year by Steve Churchill and seconded by Frank Sinicropi. No questions. Motion carried.

Being there was no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the Budget Workshop by Frank Sinicropi and seconded by Dawn Dyson. No questions. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30

Respectfully submitted,


NICALETTA J. GREER, Town Clerk

