

**VILLAGE OF CHATHAM BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
TRACY MEMORIAL HALL, 77 MAIN STREET, CHATHAM NY
THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2013, 7:00 PM EDT**

PUBLIC HEARING on the 2013/2014 Tentative Budget

Trustee Wollowitz explained new comment form he devised as a way for residents to communicate with all Trustees, the Mayor and the Village Clerk. Forms were available at this meeting and will be available in the Clerk's office in the future.

Mayor Curran explained that if a budget is not adopted before May 1, the proposed budget is automatically adopted. The Mayor has proposed a 5% tax reduction, that introduces infrastructure and beautification projects throughout the Village. He would like to see an increase in the reserve fund. Explained that the police department budget has been reduced dramatically and stated that he believes the Village can be successful with a part-time police force.

Mike Burrows – would like to know which roads and sidewalks will be repaired with the money being reduced from the police department. Mayor Curran stated that the decisions would be made through the Department of Public Works. Some need lots of work, like Payn Ave and Woodbridge Ave.

Mr. Burrows asked if the sidewalks would be replaced or repaired. Trustee Packet stated that Village residents are responsible for the sidewalks on their property. Some people clearly cannot afford to fix their portions. Walked through the Village with insurance agent – it is important to make the Village safer for all pedestrians. Mayor Curran stated that there have been two (2) injuries in the past couple of years.

Mr. Burrows asked if that affects the Village or the residents insurance. Mayor Curran answered Village insurance.

Lisa Johnson – Stated that the sidewalks on both sides of Woodbridge Ave are just a crumbled mess and very uneven. She saw a student in a wheelchair go on to the street to get around. Stated that it is a safety issue around library and school. Mayor Curran stated that the sidewalks to all down Woodbridge Ave are scheduled to be replaced by a Federal grant: Safe Routes to Schools.” Drainage and infrastructure repairs will have to be completed first.

Perry Teasdale – asked if sidewalks need to be ADA compatible. Mayor Curran answered that any new sidewalks should be, particularly in the school/safe route section. Stated that sidewalks can not exceed a certain pitch.

Brin Quell – stated that the retaining wall going down Route 66 towards Crellin is moving and crumbling. Mayor Curran thinks that is on private land. Ms. Quell stated that the land is eroding at the end and that several houses appear to be involved. Mayor Curran will have the building inspector look at this.

Ms. Quill asked Mayor Curran what portions of the budget he thinks are the best. Mayor Curran answered the investments being made to improve the Village and making the Village look better, operate better and making the Village safer. Trustee Packet stated that many roads and sidewalks need to be tended. Foot traffic needs safe areas. Keeping money going to contingency fund in case it is ever needed. Trustee Morrell asked if there is \$75,000 in contingency fund going forward. Mayor Curran answered that it's the accountants hope to get the fund up that high by the end of the year.

Joanne Del Rossi – asked if the contingency fund would be that high at the end of this budget year. Mayor Curran answered yes, at the end of this fiscal year. The accountants recommendations have been very conservative. Hope to have

\$40,000 at the end of this year, close to \$100,000 at the end of the next fiscal year.

Trustee Rippel – addressing Ms. Quell – incomplete budget so far. He is not happy with 60% hit to the police force. The budget is still being worked on. Concerned that the Village will not get support from other departments like the Sheriff's Department and the State Police. Doesn't know what will happen if their support is not enough.

Ms. Quell asked why the Sheriff's office and the State Police would not lend support. Trustee Rippel answered that he has not looked at response times yet. Would like to continue looking into this further. He finds it comforting to know that the Village police can be there within a few minutes. Stated that he is very concerned that response times will be much slower if we have to rely on other agencies. Ms. Quell stated that she thinks other towns reliance on Sheriff's Office and State Police is good and that Trustee Rippel should not be paranoid. Mayor Curran spoke to the Sheriff's Office and the State Police, and both have said they will be happy to help. They have stated that they will respond to all calls as quickly as possible. No guarantees for response times. This works well in other communities. Wants to continue a police presence, but needs to be affordable to our residents.

Rusty Vazac – asked why the school does not pay for the crossing guards. Mayor Curran answered that because one of the walkways crosses a state highway, the crossing guards need to be police department employees. Mr. Vazac stated that it would be worth exploring to see if the school could provide the funding. Mayor Curran stated that Chief Boehme said the Village is responsible for funding, not the school.

Mike Burrows – asked who will be doing the police department paperwork if their clerk position is cut from the budget. Stated that tying up an officer for that may not be a good idea. Mayor Curran answered that the Chief would now be responsible for all administrative requirements. Calls will have to be handled as they come in.

Trustee Wollowitz – asked what the term community policing means. Mayor Curran answered that community policing is having the police department more directly engaged with the community. Officers would walk around, make contact, get to know the residents, and hopefully have better rapport between officers and community. More of a community involvement with policing. State Police urge move in this direction. Perfect subject for a workshop.

Parry Teasdale – asked if accountants have completed a long term look at pensions and benefits financial costs over the next five (5) to ten (10) years and asked what likelihood of available funding would be. Mayor Curran answered that he would like to get out of this burden and will ask the accountants to work on a projection. Treasurer Henry talked about doing multi-year budgets. Mr. Teasdale asked if that would just be a suggestion, or was it already done. Treasurer Henry answered that it would be possible to do in the future, but is too late to do for this year. Mr. Teasdale asked if a multi-year budget could be looked into after this budget is put in place. Treasurer Henry answered yes, after this one is in place. Trustee Packet stated that the budget is very personal to some people. All people should be aware of new hires and the long term costs associated with them. She suggested thinking of the costs associated with hiring a 22 year old police officer and having to pay him for 40 years of service.

Lisa Johnson – stated that there are many issues here. The costs of everything continue to increase. The Village is not a bottomless pit. In 2008/2009 her taxes went up 18%. The following years, they increased 13%. After Mayor Curran was first elected, he made changes and she only had to pay a 4.7% increase. She appreciates that there have not been any increases since Mayor

Curran took office, just reductions. The Village can not sustain everything on 15% increases. The economy has changed. This is a working-class area. Food and taxes go up, but wages don't. Not sustainable at this rate. Stated that it is good to attend budget workshops. She has learned that health insurance goes up 20-25% every year. Stated that new fire trucks and new work trucks are very expensive. Villagers can't afford to pay 50% of the budget to the Police Department. There is a limit to how much working class residents can pay every year. Election results prove that responsible changes are wanted. Cuts have to be made somewhere. People are speaking with their votes. It is understandable that people are angry. We can not continue to raise taxes. Need to be like other small communities, more like the norm for small villages. Lots of talent and lots of good people here. If more people get involved, things would work better and we would all benefit.

Georgene Gardner - asked what the Police Department budget is and if it is the largest portion. Mayor Curran answered that the Department of Public Works budget is the largest. There are many roads that need to be repaired, sidewalks that need to be repaired, lawns mowed, branches cleanup, etc. They are all essential.

Mike Burrows - asked if the Department of Public Works budget includes all water and sewer. Mayor Curran answered that DPW and Water & Sewer are separate.

Mayor Curran told all assembled that he appreciates that they attended this meeting and likes hearing different points of view. He is always available for discussion and urged everyone to keep providing input.

This public hearing will be continued on Thursday, April 18, 2013.

Treasurer Henry stated that the draft budget will be available in the Clerk's Office after April 16. It will include water and sewer budgets.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Burke
Village Clerk