

VILLAGE OF CHATHAM BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
TRACY MEMORIAL HALL, 77 MAIN STREET, CHATHAM NY
THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 2013, 7:00 PM EDT

PUBLIC HEARING on the 2013/2014 Tentative Budget

Mayor Curran explained to all present that this is a continuation of a public hearing from April 11, 2013. The proposed budget has a 5% decrease. Beautification and street improvement are included in this budget. Planning & Zoning changes need to be made; as well as a review of the Comprehensive Plan. Stated that he would like to build reserve accounts up to recommended levels. The accountant currently estimates that there is only \$8,300 in our fund balance. This is a conservative figure, but he had been hoping that number would be much higher. Revenues are slow right now. The proposed budget has big reduction to the Police Department and added funding in other areas.

Cindy Smith – stated that prices for Welsh garbage seem high. Asked if there are other companies that could be used. Suggested that raising sticker prices might not be the answer. Mayor Curran answered that Welsh was the only bidder the last time the garbage bidding was accepted. There is one year left on their contract. Trustee Packet stated that there are big differences with garbage pick-up vs. using the transfer station. She hopes to have a workshop meeting to address this topic further.

Ms. Smith once again requested purchasing a wireless microphone for these meetings.

Ms. Smith stated that the Village website is not up-to-date and current copies of minutes are not posted on the website. Mayor Curran answered that the Village is in the process of getting a new site. The new site will be updated by the Village Clerk and the Village Treasurer as needed and should be much more timely than the current site. Trustee Packet said copies of all minutes can be obtained from the Clerk's office.

Lisa Johnson – stated that she is on the website committee. They have spent months working on the new site information. The current site is hard to manage. The committee has gathered all of the materials they need for the new site. The Village Clerk will be trained in how to update the site. The whole gathering process was very time consuming.

Ms. Smith – concerned about reduction in Police Department.

Carol Simmons – proposed numbers for retiree's medical insurance seems quite high. Expenses to cover police department clerk are included in this budget when they should not be. Asked if any polls have been completed to homeowners about their sidewalks. Mayor Curran commented that there is a lot of work to be done in the Village.

Ms. Simmons stated that the sewer budget was fine when she left her position here, and stated that there were never any problems, and stated that contrary to what was expressed at previous meetings, the water & sewer budget has not been wrong for years. Treasurer Henry stated that coding errors for some of the funding has caused problems.

Ms. Simmons asked if the Village is getting more CHIPs. Mayor Curran answered yes, the state is providing more.

Ms. Simmons asked is there were any figures for water and sewer revenue yet. Treasurer Henry answered no, not received from accountant yet. Ms. Simmons stated that a budget should not be completed without all revenue included.

Ms. Smith stated that it makes no sense to make a budget without all of the figures included. Treasurer Henry stated that we now know the fund balance in water & sewer.

Ms. Simmons asked how can you know what can be spent if you don't know what is coming in. Mayor Curran answered that he is working with Delaware Engineering to figure everything out.

Trustee Rippel asked if that information will be available before the budget is supposed to be voted on. He asked for this information two (2) weeks ago and has not received it yet. Stressed that this information is needed now in order to make the budget complete.

Trustee Morrell asked when the information would be available. Treasurer Henry answered that errors from the past few months are slowing things down.

Dave O'Connor – stated as an item of order, that people should address the Board and there should not be any ongoing questioning. Would like to commend the current board for proposing a budget so early. The entire Board and the Mayor have been very open to comments. Stated that previous administrations did not allow for much input and rushed everything. He is concerned with the fund balance. Thinks maybe no tax cut or a lower tax cut might solve some problems.

Melanie Spock – asked how much is in the reserve fund now. Mayor Curran answered that the accountants have projected \$8,000 at the end of this fiscal year. Ms. Spock asked if this was based on certain revenues not coming in. Mayor Curran doesn't think all money due will come in. He stated that there are back taxes to go after – he thinks that total is about \$75,000. Trustee Rippel asked how many properties that would be for. Mayor Curran answered that a property inventory on back taxes needs to be completed. Some may be too small to bother with.

Trustee Wollowitz asked Ms. Simmons to go over her numbers again. Ms. Simmons stated that she would provide her notes to the Mayor and the Board.

Georgine Gardner – stated that not all information is needed to complete this budget. More than two (2) YEARS AGO, VERY SHORT NOTICE WAS PROVIDED. Thank you for all of the time allowed for input. Very much a work in progress.

Trustee Rippel – NYS law requires certain things for a tentative budget. Gives guidelines and laws. Thinks too much information is missing to complete budget. Doing residents of Chatham a disservice by not having all of the information that is needed. He requested information two (2) weeks ago and still does not have it. All Trustees are trying to work together, and cannot do this with missing figures.

Joanne Del Rossi – asked what would happen if the budget is not finished by May 1, 2013? Mayor Curran answered that the tentative budget would pass automatically. Will work diligently to get all information, particularly water and sewer. Should have some of the information soon. The budget process is a huge task and is very time consuming.

Dave O'Connor – Melanie Spock and I serve on the CCSD School Board together. Have had dramatic changes in line items on school budget. Don't think it is unusual to have errors. Thanks to all Trustees for working together and trying to good for our community.

Melanie Spock – stated that it sometimes takes years to fix coding errors. Not always a quick solution to that type of problem. Mayor Curran stated that all bottom line figures are correct. Treasurer Henry stated that ours isn't the typical Village budget, ours is broken down into much more detail than most. Helps track information, but makes it harder to get accurate information. Trustee Wollowitz stated that major overall numbers are missing. Trustee Rippel stated that expenses and fund balances are missing. Trustee Wollowitz stated that there is only a short time left until the budget is due to be voted on. The accountant is focusing on the little stuff. Treasurer Henry stated that the small details are needed in order to get the bottom line. Trustee Wollowitz asked what would be the best way to proceed. It is not 100% compliant now and probably will not be 100% compliant by the May 1 deadline. Asked what the Board of Trustees can do. Asked if the best previous year totals can be used. Asked if there are accurate revenue numbers from last year. Mayor Curran answered that all "water & sewer" comes in as "water." Trustee Wollowitz stated that a total is better.

Cindy Smith – Concerned because there are so many discrepancies. Carol Simmons picked up on quite a few things. There are some big differences. Asked how accurate the rest of it can be. Mayor Curran answered that he will look into the Health/Retirement figures that Ms. Simmons brought up and stated that Ms. Simmons will copy her notes for the Trustees to review.

Joanne Del Rossi – asked what the accountants position on adopting the budget as it now is. Mayor Curran answered that it can be done. Ms. Del Rossi asked if it can be done with the details that are missing. Mayor Curran answered yes, and stated that when major repairs are made, will need to have accurate information.

Mike Burrows – Asked about the \$80,000/year savings from the Police Department. Is there an easy way to see where that money will be spent. Mayor Curran suggested looking at year to date and tentative totals – if they are different, then a change took place. Listed some specific examples,

Cindy Smith – asked if the Village is going to start utilizing community policing. Mayor Curran answered that this will be a good workshop topic. Stated that community policing is a good way to get the community and the police department more connected and involved with each other. Mayor Curran also stated that the State Police and the Columbia County Sheriff's Department will provide support to the Village as needed. They can not guarantee response times. The Village is looking a little ratty, need to make improvements.

Carol Simmons – asked why contingency account is going to streets. Mayor Curran stated that he misspoke. Trustee Morrell stated that some of those funds have been spent. Ms. Simmons asked why there is \$100,000 in contingent and asked if people are being taxed for this. Asked why this doesn't show up as a line item. Mayor Curran said this could be discussed further at the next workshop meeting, Tuesday, April 23. Ms. Simmons stated that funds are just shown in contingency, not appropriated. Asked if there are plans to spend this money. Mayor Curran answered no.

Joanne Del Rossi – asked if the projected increase in health insurance is approximately 20-25%. Mayor Curran answered yes. Ms. Del Rossi asked if this is for retirees as well. Treasurer Henry answered no, only one would.

Mayor Curran stated that the budget for vehicle repair has increased because the fleet is aging. Would like to buy a new truck if they can. Budget \$15,000 for repairs does not make sense if can buy new for around the same price. Something must be done with aging trucks.

Cindy Smith – asked if there is a big difference between the audit, finances and office computer. Mayor Curran answered that all office equipment is replaced on a rotational basis. Looking to replace current copier with one that will do it all – fax, scan and copy. Mr. Smith asked what would happen with the old printers. Mayor Curran answered that many are too old to be of any use and will probably be junked.

Trustee Morrell stated that the Village will be investing in new software for the building inspector and the water/sewer billing. All of the new software will interface with the tax software. It is the best package deal for costs and training.

Harry Smith – asked if the “actual” totals for 2011 can be added in to this budget. Treasurer Henry answered that was done with last year’s budget. This year’s budget is based on expenses from the previous year. Mr. Smith suggested that it would help with comparisons in the whole budget process. Treasurer Henry said she will include them. Mr. Smith thinks it would be best to see actual instead of just proposed totals from previous years. Treasurer Henry answered that adjustments would typically have been made already.

Trustee Wollowitz – asked for 2011/2012 to show actual rather than adopted. Treasurer Henry answered that she would do that. Trustee Wollowitz asked if the totals are available. Treasurer Henry says she thinks so. Trustee Wollowitz stated that the Board doesn’t necessarily need historical figures, need current prices.

Trustee Rippel read from Village Law 5-506 – Village law requires that actual numbers from previous year be included. The last completed year would be 2011/2012.

Rusty Vazac – Stated that accountants probably don’t use those figures, but it would be good for us. He remembers past budget sessions. Budget process can be very confusing. Good to see what was actually spent in previous year.

Cindy Smith – has worked with many churches and their budgets. It is good to see how much was really spent. Agrees that it is good to see what was actually spent, and it’s the law according to Trustee Rippel.

Harry Smith – Regarding water & sewer - the county approached some local towns to join services – was Chatham approached? Trustee Morrell answered that the County did that without asking the Village to participate. Only a limited number of villages/towns were allowed to join in. Other towns were picked first. Will follow up with them in the future.

Dave O’Connor – had some of these things with school too. Not always a good thing. Often requires clerks’ time, additional workers, etc. Many make out better just seeing study results.

Lisa Johnson – Agrees that is good to have actual expenditures. Expect that things wouldn't line up exactly because of line items and coding issues. Could appear odd many, may not be easy to read accurately. Appreciate that all of you put in these hours and put forth this effort. Thank you for the work you do. Not easy to face people for and against what you are trying to do. More than happy if taxes stay the same instead of going down. Amazing to have tax decreases two (2) years in a row. Can't please everyone. All people can't afford increases every year. Road repair is much needed. Not giving up the police department, but can't keep giving them more than 50% of the total budget. Not realistic to do so. Thanks again for all you do.

Motion made by Trustee Packet, seconded by Trustee Morrell, to close public hearing. All approved.

There will be a workshop meeting next Tuesday, April 23, beginning at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Burke
Village Clerk