

Minutes of the Special Budget Workshop of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Lake George, NY, held on Thursday, March 14, 2024 at 10:00am. Zoom teleconferencing was available.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Raymond Perry, Mayor
Joe Mastrodomenico, Trustee
Jose Filomeno, Trustee
Alyson Miller, Trustee
John Root, Trustee

Also present were: Clerk Julie Allen, Treasurer Danae Bock, Superintendent Keith Lanfear, and Chief Operator Tim Shudt.

At 10:00am Mayor Perry opened the meeting and began by stating that even though there were difficult economic times, we were able to keep the tax increase at less than 1%. He thanked Clerk Julie Allen and Treasurer Danae Bock for all the hard work they had done to be able to present the Budget to the Board. The Mayor said he would go over the Budget line by line and that he would be pulling the A1210 account regarding the increase in salary for the Mayor to allow for the Board to discuss it without him present. He said Trustee and Deputy Mayor salaries would remain the same as last year. He said Justice would have a \$200 increase. There will be no money in the auditor category as there would be no need for an audit next year. He reviewed the Clerk-Treasurer account stating that the Clerk had put in for raises for both the Treasurer and Planning and Zoning Clerk. He said that he had put in for a raise for the Clerk as she brings work home and goes above and beyond daily, as do other members of the office. The Mayor went on to say that the Clerk had also increased contractual due to increase costs for supplies, phones, and electricity. Trustee Root asked for a break down of just the salaries. Treasurer Bock ran copies and presented a copy to all present at the meeting.

The Mayor stated that this was a workshop, that no decisions would be made, and that any requested changes needed to be presented prior to the March 18th meeting to allow enough time to re-work the numbers. He said that March 25, 2024 the finalized Budget would be voted on.

The Mayor explained that both the Legal Advertising and Credit Card Fee accounts remained the same as last year. He said that the Law account would need to go up due to the increase in hourly rates by our Village Attorney. The Mayor explained that they charge us at a lower rate than their other customers. The Mayor said that he lowered the amount of money in our Engineer account by half as there is nothing coming up that they know of at this point. He said that money was put in for the Election account as there will be an upcoming election in this Budget. The Records Management account remained the same as last year. The Mayor said that the increase in the Public Works Administration account was for half of Superintendent Lanfear's salary.

Mayor Perry said that the amount in Buildings was down, and that the money asked for in Central Garage was for tree planters, phones, gas, fuel, and National Grid. The account for Central Storeroom stayed the same as last year. The Mayor said the money for Special Items had gone down in all but Contingency. Mayor Perry explained that there was no money put in for Public Safety as we are not going to be billed by the Sheriff. The Mayor explained that we are proceeding with building a substation in our Village Administration Office. Trustee Root asked who would be paying for the construction to our building. The Mayor explained that he believed that the County would be paying for it. The Mayor said that we would need to get

something together to know what's needed to get the work done. Trustee Miller asked if the Sheriff would be charging us at any point for overtime. Mayor Perry said that we would not be billed and that he had the Sheriffs word. Traffic Control was down from last year. The Mayor explained that the money in On Street Parking was for replacing more parking meters. Trustee Root asked if we could look into the ones with the keyboards. The Mayor said that we are standardized to IPS, but we can see if they offer the ones with keyboards and if they are the same amount of money, we can definitely consider them. There was discussion about different kinds of meters.

Mayor Perry said they left the Fire Department the same as last year. The Mayor explained that he put in for a bump in pay for Code Enforcement as he is an excellent employee. The Mayor went overspending for the Health Registrar and Vital Statistics.

The Mayor went over the salary increases for Street Maintenance, explaining that we are trying to even out the current hire rates vs those that have been working here for years. Trustee Miller asked how often we went into overtime. The Mayor explained that this year we had not touched it as it was a very tame winter. The Mayor went on to say that we did budget for it in the event that it is needed.

Mayor Perry said that snow removal would remain the same. He said that Street Lighting cost was up a little bit due to the cost of electricity. He said that Sidewalks is up a little because we are needing to make some repairs. Trustee Root requested that if there was money in the Budget, could we repair or replace some of the cigarette butt containers. The Mayor said we would be able to accommodate the request.

Mayor Perry explained that Bus Operations is the CDTA contract. He went on to Off Street Parking explaining that these are to pay the portion of our contracts for parking meters. He explained that this year he added \$40,000 to the costs for what he believes we would be paying for the new Tariq Parking area. The Mayor suggested that we should charge \$3/hour as it is prime location parking.

Mayor Perry said that we had separated out the Teen Center from the Student Connection account as they are two separate things. He explained that we want to keep them separate as the Teen Center receives donations.

Mayor Perry said that this year we do not have to contribute to the Joint Town/Village Occ Tax as the County already gave the Village and Town funds to share. The Mayor said there was a Joint Occupancy meeting scheduled on March 18, 2024. He went on to say that he had recently taken over a few of the events due to recent events. Trustee Root said that the plan was to have the Mayor shadow the Special Events Director take over eventually.

Mayor Perry said that he did increase the Budget for Rec Center. He said that Eugene VanAlan has proven himself to be a valued employee. He went on to explain some of the changes and upgrades that he has been able to accomplish at the Rec Center. Trustee Miller asked if the Personal Services account includes hiring a part time seasonal employee to work at the Rec Center. Mayor Perry affirmed that it does include full time seasonal help.

Mayor Perry explained the Budget for the Parks, stating that he had increased Personal Services, and either reduced or kept the rest the same. The Mayor said that he reduced Marina and Docks as there were minimal costs associated with it. Superintendent Lanfear said that the only thing he knew they needed to purchase were new bumpers.

Mayor Perry explained that he eliminated Band Concerts and Celebrations accounts and instead moved the costs into the Occ Tax budget where he felt it belonged.

Mayor Perry explained that the Home and Community account were to pay the salary for Dan Barusch. He explained the Planning account Personal Services was to pay the Planning Clerk for meetings. The Mayor said the increase in the Contractual account was to pay for the Comprehensive Plan and DRI.

Mayor Perry went over the raise for Chief Operator Schudt and the employees that will be receiving certification. Mayor Perry explained that they had reduced the Budget for the Sanitary Sewer System, the Sewer Plant, Storm Sewers, and Street Cleaning. He explained the cost for the Sewer Treatment Plant equipment was for some new pumps. He explained that he had increased the Budget for Refuse Collection, Beautification, and Shade Trees. Trustee Root asked if we were proceeding with the Gateway work. Mayor Perry responded yes, but we did make it more manageable by removing the side tree pits.

Mayor Perry did an overview of the Employee Benefits, stopping to review the buy-out and insurance costs. He explained the Debt Service, and the remaining accounts are all at the minimum levels needed to cover costs.

He finalized by saying the total Budget would be \$6,537,322.00 of which only \$1,320,362.00 would need to be raised by taxes. He said that if you look at the cost increases in everyday life, in essence we were able to decrease taxes because they did not increase at the same levels.

Mayor Perry began going over the Water Budget by explaining the revenues did not meet our expenditures. He said the main increase in expenditures was for chemicals. He explained that the Village should have increased the rates last year to help cover these expenses. He said the chemicals suppliers are refusing to even go out to bid and we are stuck paying their rates. He said that this year we will have to raise our water rates 5% for Village users and 10% for Town users. He said other municipalities charge 2½ times the rate for outside users, where we only charge 15% more. He explained that we would be looking to use approximately \$100,000 from our unallocated water fund balance to cover it. He explained that next year it should not be as much as there should not be the large expenditures like the pumps and furnace that we would need to purchase in this Budget.

At 11:27am Mayor Perry excused himself from the meeting to allow the Board to discuss a possible raise for the Mayor.

Trustee Joe Mastrodomenico began by explaining to the rest of the Board that we have requested to raise the salary for Mayor to \$50,000.00 per year. He went on to say that he felt that \$50,000.00 may not be enough for the position. He said that the position had not seen an increase in many years. He said that Mayor Perry is doing a fantastic job and that he has seen that the Mayor is very involved and spends a lot of time at the office. Trustee Filomeno asked when the last raise was. Trustee Mastrodomenico said he didn't know specifically, but it was a very long time ago. Treasurer Bock said that in order to change the salary, we would have to change it in the law as well as put it in the Budget. She said that she and Clerk Julie Allen felt these kinds of fees/costs should be pulled from the laws and kept on a separate fee schedule that can be changed as needed rather than changing a law every time.

Trustee Filomeno said that he as an employer can see the value of work. He then said he can also see the value of a good employee. He said from day one, Mayor Perry has put in extra time on the job and seen his private time decline. He said the job doesn't stop; the Mayor is always at work. Trustee Filomeno said he saw the changes that Mayor Perry had made and continued to make with technology upgrades. He said he also believed that the Board has an obligation to entice the next person that may want to run for Mayor. He said that he felt \$60,000.00 would be a better amount to offer. He said they need to pay professionally to get professionals.

Trustee Root said that for many years, he felt former Mayor Blais should take a raise and was underpaid. He said he had tried to get former Mayor Blais to take a raise, but it was refused. He went on to say that last year, when they separated the Mayor position and the Event Directors Position, that the compensation between both was fair. He said that if Mayor Perry was to take on the Events Director position as well as the Mayor position then it would warrant an increase. He continued to say that a \$10,000.00 increase with no extra duties did not seem justifiable. He said he would have a hard time justifying to the public a 25% increase without adding the Director of Events duties. He said Mayor Perry ran for the position knowing the salary was \$40,000.00. Trustee Root asked if we could pay the Mayor out of Occupancy Tax. Treasurer Bock said that you cannot. Trustee Root said he would only be willing to add the extra money to the Mayor position if he were to take on some of the extra duties and therefore decrease the amount the Event Director is paid.

There was discussion on whether the current Director of Events would be continuing.

Trustee Mastrodomenico said that for the moment he felt we should keep the discussion to just the increase to the Mayors position and not bring in how the Director of Events position should be handled.

Trustee Miller asked the Clerk, Treasurer, Superintendent, and Chief Operator if they would like to weigh in on the discussion.

Clerk Allen stated that she felt it was not feasible to offer anyone a full-time position with the current Mayors duties and responsibilities, as little as they do currently. She said she felt the position was very underpaid at \$40,000.00. She went on to say that the Mayor is the person in charge of all Village employees and is not being compensated as such.

Chief Operator Shudt said he felt that a good portion of his, and any management position salary is because of the huge amount of responsibility. He said that with the Mayors position, everything falls to him. He said if anything goes wrong, it is ultimately the Mayor that must answer to it. He said he felt that warrants the extra money.

Trustee Root questioned how he could justify the extra money because residents had already questioned why the Board kept the salary the same while splitting off the events directors' duties.

Treasurer Bock responded to Trustee Root that the way he could justify the increase to the public, is by stating that he felt for years the position was underpaid. She stated that she had to have an answer from the Board in order to finalize the Budget in time for the Budget hearing.

Superintendent Lanfear said he was in agreement with Chief Operator Shudt. He said the position should be paid more.

Trustee Miller said that she could see that \$50,000.00 for a full-time position is fairer than the current rate. She said that across the Board, this rate is more in line with current salaries. Trustee Mastrodomenico said that the majority was in agreement with increasing the salary of the Mayor by \$10,000.000, so they would go forward with it in the Budget.

Treasurer Bock confirmed with the Board that there were no requests or changes to the Budget.

At 12:09pm Mayor Perry returned to the meeting.

Trustee Miller asked to verify that Beautification received the funding for the tools and supplies she requested. Keith Lanfear responded that there were some items that the DPW and Beautification would have to share but that she received most of what she asked for.

Trustee Mastrodomenico expressed to the Mayor that the Board would be allowing the \$10,000.00 increase.

Mayor Perry asked for any other comments, suggestions, or questions. Trustee Mastrodomenico thanked everyone for their hard work in putting the Budget together.

Trustee Mastrodomenico made a motion to adjourn at 12:21pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie K. Allen
Clerk
Village of Lake George