

VESTAL TOWN BOARD WORK SESSION MINUTES
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2014

In Attendance: Supervisor Schaffer and Board Members Fitzgerald, Majewski and Messina.

Also Attending: Comptroller Laura McKane, Town Clerk Emil Bielecki, Press Reporter Megan Brockett and 4 members of the community.

The Work Session was **convened by Supervisor Schaffer at 6:00 PM.**

2015 Fire District Budget Review

Comptroller Laura McKane presented the Board with the updated 2015 Fire District Budget. The major difference from what was presented at the last review session is that \$10,000 was restored to line F3410-2255 for building improvements. The proposed budget has an increase in spending of 1.0% (excluding the Foam District). The actual amount going against the state mandated cap is down mostly because of the foam district. If adopted as is, the 2015 Proposed Fire District Budget would result in a tax increase of \$0.72 on a home with an assessed valuation of \$100,000. By law, the 2015 Proposed Fire District Budget must be adopted by September 30, 2014. The public hearing on the proposed budget is scheduled for October 21, 2014 and the final budget must be adopted by November 4, 2014. The Board can make additional changes to the budget prior to the adoption of the final budget.

Councilman Majewski asked why the internet line in the fire budget is up by 63%. Comptroller McKane will look into it.

After a brief discussion, the Board agreed to vote on the 2015 Proposed Fire District Budget as presented by Comptroller McKane.

2015 Proposed Fire Vestal Fire District Budget Adopted and Public Hearing Scheduled

R240-14 On a motion of Councilwoman Messina, seconded by Councilman Majewski, the following resolution was

ADOPTED Ayes 4 Majewski, Fitzgerald, Messina, Schaffer
Nays 0

Resolved to adopt the 2015 Proposed Vestal Fire District Budget totaling \$1,181,018 and to authorize the publishing of the notice of a budget hearing on October 15, 2014 for a hearing to be held on October 21, 2014.

2015 General Fund Budget Review

Comptroller Laura McKane presented the Board with the updated review level 2015 Budget of Townwide Funds reflecting the changes and adjustments that were made since the last budget review session. She highlighted the following items:

- Health insurance rates are up 7.8% following the review with our insurance consultant. There are significant and ongoing large claims along with the cost trending medical claims and prescription drugs. New specialty drugs are a concern. There is added coverage for new hires in the Business Office (1), Code (1) and Highway (1). The cost of retiree Medicare Advantage policy is being supplemented with fund balance of the health insurance self-insurance fund.
- Library aid is estimated to be cut by one-third.
- The carrier estimates that Workers Comp will increase by 15% due to poor experience.
- The increase in snow overtime and police overtime is based on history, not on 2014 projection.
- The salt budget is based on average usage in tons. Prices are up 23%

VESTAL TOWN BOARD WORK SESSION MINUTES
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2014

- The estimated revenue from the mortgage tax has been cut. The sales tax revenue is left flat.
- The wage increases for the open union contracts are estimates. For every 1% increase in wages, the Town needs roughly \$80,000 in new revenue.
- Per Supervisor, a wage increase of was added for department heads, deputies, non-union wages (except historian and ZBA attorney) and the two full-time elected officials.
- Provided funds for all Board members to go to the Association of Towns annual training conference.
- The new minimum increased from \$8 in 2014 to \$8.75 in 2015. Recreation Department budget reflects higher than minimum wage for some positions. Parks and Highway summer help figured at new minimum wage not minimum + \$.50 as in the past.
- No funds are included for pesticide certification for one employee. Item being researched.
- It is recommended that fund balance not be applied to the 2015 general fund budget because our fund balance level should not be reduced below the current levels.

Supervisor Schaffer noted that the requested new police officer position has been cut and the Code position is under review. We still have a lot of work on this budget after the tentative budget is filed.

Councilman Majewski asked how many summer employees are funded in the Parks and Highway budgets for 2015. Comptroller McKane replied that Parks has funding for 3 summer employees and Highway has funding for two.

Comptroller McKane noted that the special districts budgets are not included in this presentation. The tax levy and the user rates on the special districts will be left the same. She further noted that as we progress through the budget process, all budget lines will be carefully reviewed. She invited the Board members to identify any budgetary items or issues which they may want to focus on for more detailed review. One suggestion is to review how the premium equivalent figure is calculated for health insurance.

After a brief review of the budget documents provided by Comptroller Laura McKane, the Board authorized her to file the 2015 Tentative Town Budget with the Clerk's office on September 30, 2014 with appropriations of \$25,398,734.

The 2015 Tentative Budget shows an increase in spending of 2.2%. The increase in tax rate from 2014 to 2015 is 7.6% and the increase in the tax levy is 7.6%. For a home with an assessed value of \$100,000, the increase would be \$31.55.

According to the estimates provided by Comptroller McKane, the Board would need to reduce the budget by an additional \$156,131 to meet the state tax cap.

Purchase of Fire Chief Vehicle Approved (tabled on September 24, 2014)

R241-14 On a motion of Councilwoman Messina, seconded by Councilman Majewski, the following resolution was

ADOPTED Ayes 4 Majewski, Fitzgerald, Messina, Schaffer
Nays 0

Resolved to **authorize the purchase of a new vehicle for the Fire Department Chief** from funds set aside in the Vestal Fire District Capital Reserve Fund established pursuant to Section 6-g of the

VESTAL TOWN BOARD WORK SESSION MINUTES
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2014

General Municipal Law at a **cost not to exceed \$50,000**. This resolution is **subject to permissive referendum** in accordance with the requirements of Section 6-g of the General Municipal Law.

General Reserve Funds Allocated for Property at 512 Front Street

In a memo to the Board, dated 9/29/14, Comptroller Laura McKane states the following: the Town has a balance of \$26,234 in what is known as the General Reserve Fund which was established in 1970 pursuant to Town Law Section 55. The Town Board previously authorized the expenditure of up to \$18,000 from this reserve for the purchase of the property located at 512 Front Street. Now that the property has been acquired, funds need to be allocated to the asbestos removal, tear down of the building and costs associated with the parking lot. The plans are to use surplus millings to ready the parking lot and in the spring, stone and oil will be applied. As these costs were not budgeted, I am proposing that the Town Board allocate funds from the General Reserve Fund for this purpose.

R242-14 On a motion of Councilwoman Messina, seconded by Councilman Majewski, the following resolution was

ADOPTED Ayes 3 Fitzgerald, Messina, Schaffer
Nays 1 Majewski

Resolved that the Town Board of the Town of Vestal, pursuant to the provisions for Section 55 of the Town Law, hereby authorizes the **expenditure from the General Reserve Fund of up to \$12,500** for improvements to the real property located at 512 Front Street, Vestal, NY. This resolution is **subject to a Permissive Referendum**, notice of which shall be posted and published in accordance with Section 90 of the Town Law.

Executive Session

On a motion of Councilwoman Messina, seconded by Councilwoman Fitzgerald, the following resolution was

ADOPTED Ayes 4 Fitzgerald, Majewski, Messina, Schaffer
Nays 0

Resolved the Board enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing the unsettled labor contracts. The time was 7:01 PM.

On a motion of Councilwoman Fitzgerald, seconded by Councilwoman Messina, the following was

ADOPTED Ayes 4 Fitzgerald, Messina, Majewski, Schaffer
Nays 0

Resolved the Board leave Executive Session and **adjourn the Work Session. The time was 7:30 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Emil Bielecki, Town Clerk