

2022 Budget Hearing
October 12, 2021
6:00 pm

Present: Supervisor Gerald L. Deming, Council Members: Lynn Parnell, Amos Smith, Norman Gates and Frank Rose Jr.

Absent: None

Others: Dennis House, Vince Burroughs, Henry Fuller, Davies Nagel, Heather Nagel, Blaine VanRy, Dustin Geiger, Justin Bennett (Baldwin Business Accounting Services), Kirk Richenberg, Donna Walker, James Campbell (Town Attorney), Martha Edmonds, Ned Edmonds, George Worden Jr, Linda Muscarella, Becky Lewis, Denise Hahn, Brittany Hart, Jaylin Brooks, Cindy Myers, David Rose, Molly Cummings, Marta Nagel Burroughs, Anne-Roth Blizzard, Chris Ward, Larry Lacy, Cortney Underwood, Greg Burm, Melissa Alber and Irene Sick.

Supervisor Deming opened the Budget meeting at 6:01pm. Stating the purpose of the hearing was for the review of the upcoming 2022 Town budget and noted that the rate for 2022 will be 2.52/\$100,000 in assessed value which is a .62% increase and the Fire Tax is \$1.32/\$100,000 is a 1.8% increase. The Supervisor then went on to say that there are no planned purchases of equipment and there are funds in the Capital Reserve for the future.

Mr. Bennett then spoke briefly explaining from a budgeting standpoint the Towns projected revenue vs property taxes that are slated for 2022.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS:

Q-Heather Nagel: Ms. Nagel's questions were related to the Town's Comp Plan update and if there were any funds appropriated in this budget for those updates.

Supervisor Deming replied that there were no funds appropriated in the upcoming 2022 Budget for updates but that there was grant funding and solar funds now available for the Board to potentially use when the times comes for that purpose. To date, the Board has not yet discussed/agreed upon a use of those funds.

Q-Ms. Nagel discussed at length 3 examples in the Town's current Comp Plan and inquired as to whose responsibility it is to have Comp Plan legislated as her concern was why invest funds in an update if zoning regs are not being carried out as stated in the existing plan.

Supervisor Deming mentioned that the plan is to update the Comp Plan next year and Zoning will be updated as well at the same time.

Mr. Deming then reminded the group that this was a Budget Hearing and if/when we decide to expend funds for the Comp Plan, there will be a Public Hearing on the matter at which comments may then be received.

Q-Ms. Nagel did ask if solar funds were included in this budget.

Supervisor Deming replied they were not.

Q-Vince Burroughs: Mr. Burroughs stated that he had several questions re: York Fire Department and noted the current Fire Contract mentions answering all calls and posed the question as to what that meant.

Supervisor Deming replied that it means the fire department goes when they are called out.

Mr. Burroughs then mentioned a particular call earlier that day in Fowlerville and noted what units did respond and the time frame of their response. In his opinion, the response time by the York Fire Dept was not acceptable.

At that time, Dustin Geiger, York Fire Chief who also was in attendance clarified and corrected Mr. Burroughs as to what the actual time frame was and who was called to the scene. After a lengthy discussion, Mr. Burroughs posed the question to Supervisor Deming asking if he believed they (York Fire Dept) answered the call to which the Supervisor stated yes, in his opinion it sounded like they did.

Q- Mr. Burroughs then asked the Supervisor and the Board how did they arrive at the figure budgeted to the Fire Department in 2022.

Supervisor Deming stated it was 3% over last year's amount while also mentioning that we are contracting with the Fire Department to provide a service to the Town of York.

Mr. Burroughs also noted that in the contract, it states maintaining adequate services and equipment and questioned as to whether manpower could be considered a service. Mr. Deming then asked Mr. Burroughs if he would like to see the term manpower added to the contract to which Mr. Burroughs spoke more so of addressing time responses. In addition, Mr. Burroughs stated that based upon his 49 years as a firefighter, manpower is an ongoing issue to contend with.

Mr. Burroughs then asked Chief Geiger how many members there are currently in the Fire Department and in what capacity they serve with Mr. Geiger responding 29 active members and would rather not speculate on the rest of the numbers this evening.

Mr. Burroughs then circled back to discuss the emergency call from earlier in the day and said "12-minute response time with 2 men does not constitute a proper response". Mr. Burroughs went on to add that in his opinion, the return on their investment is not beneficial for the Town.

Mr. Burroughs then discussed the idea of paid on call fireman and provided a few figures as to how it could/would work and proposed it may be an avenue to pursue noting that we needed to come up with a solution but admittedly did not have the answers.

Q-Mr. Burroughs asked what funds are allocated for the ambulance?

Both Supervisor Deming and Chief Geiger answered none.

Mr. Burroughs then stated that the ambulance is a disservice at the moment. Mr. Geiger stated that it is 100% self-sustained but did admit that they were low on medics.

Q-Mr. Burroughs asked the Supervisor and the Board if they were happy?

Supervisor Deming spoke on behalf of the Board and replied yes, I am happy with what we pay for Fire Protection. Mr. Deming then turned to the Board and stated "if this Board thinks we are not covered by the Fire Department they need to speak up". There were no additional comments regarding the Fire department at this time.

Supervisor Deming continued on with the budget hearing by asking the group in attendance if there were any other questions to address to which Mr. Kirk Richenberg answered "sure".

Q-Mr. Richenberg noted at the Budget workshop meeting it was asked about the Fire Department financial statements and if he could have access to those?

No financial statements were provided but Councilwoman Parnell noted that she had recently met with the fire department to review expenses.

Q-Mr. Burroughs asked if the Town cared as to what they (Fire Department) had in the bank?

Mr. Bennett addressed both previous questions stating that the Fire Department is providing a service and once they have been given the funds, the town cannot control how they are spent and what is in anyone's bank account. Using the example that the Town contracts for his accounting and Mr. Campbell's legal services but certainly would have no idea as to what either of those businesses had in their bank accounts.

Q-Mr. Richenberg asked if the Board had information to justify the 3% increase?

Councilwoman Parnell spoke up and read notes she took from the meeting she recently attended with the Fire Department. Mrs. Parnell was able to share with the group several items as part of a lengthy list of necessary purchases and expenditures. Examples given were safety equipment, physicals, training apparatus, medical supplies etc.

Q-Mr. Richenberg inquired as to what the cost-of-living increases were?

Chief Geiger stated 8-11% higher this year.

Q-Mr. Richenberg asked if the contract had been signed yet?

Supervisor Deming stated no, the contract has not yet been signed.

Mrs. Parnell then added some additional costs to the list of expenditures noting that the cost of insurance was now at \$18,000 and the cost of yearly physicals per member is now \$500 for each.

Q-Mr. Richenberg then noted at the Budget workshop, the budget history shows that in 2020 there was \$216,000 Fire Tax collected was \$198,000.00 that went to Fire Co...where did \$18,000.00 go?

Supervisor Deming mentioned contracting with Livingston County ambulance at that time as Mr. Bennett took several minutes to confirm and verify that.

Q-Mr. Richenberg asked to confirm that the Lighting District account was closed and changed to General Fund in 2021...correct? He then inquired as to where the carry over funds got placed.

Supervisor Deming said the funds were put in the General Fund Balance.

Q-Mr. Richenberg then asked why the dollar amount wasn't used to reduce the line item?

Mr. Bennett replied to Mr. Richenberg's question by asking, "you want to know why property taxes don't go down upon a temporary movement of funds?" While discussing that the Town of York still has expenses to maintain associated with that particular account.

Q-Mr. Richenberg asked to know the number that was transferred from the Lighting District account while commenting that with the LED conversion and rebates included there should be a considerable savings.
At that time, Mr. Bennett confirmed that \$34,921.00 was moved from the Lighting Dist. account into the General Fund balance.

Resident Donna Walker then took a moment to share a comment regarding the York Fire Department. Ms. Walker said that with \$200,000 being the average cost of 1 home in our area, we have to look at the job the department is doing and feels they are worthy of the amount budgeted and clearly supports the work they are doing.

Q-Mr. Richenberg stated that town wide, taxes to be raised is changing \$10,000 this year. How much is coming from Cheese Factory/Creamery?

Supervisor Deming said nothing has changed, they are still paying their debt service. Mr. Deming also mentioned that Livingston County is looking into other avenues regarding the PILOT program.

Q-Mr. Richenberg then stated on the Revenue side, A2555 Zoning Permits...are the Solar permits in there?

Both Supervisor Deming and Mr. Bennett confirmed the dollar amount of \$54,000 in the permit allocation and continued to discuss the use of the Towns fund balances with Mr. Richenberg.

Q-Mr. Richenberg asked why the Solar funds were not included in the budget?

Supervisor Deming stated that they were not included as the Town cannot access the funds until next month. It was a requirement that the funds received were to be held in an escrow account for a certain period of time.

Mr. Bennett added that in accounting practices, budgets have to stay balanced explaining that revenues and expenses have to be consistent so it could not be added to the budget until it was earmarked and accessible.

Q- Mr. Richenberg asked where is the money being held?

Both the Supervisor and Town Attorney answered Mr. Richenberg's question noting that the escrow account is set up with the Bank of Castile.

Q-Mr. Richenberg asked about Revenue for out of district water sales referring to the Town of Leicester's line.

Supervisor Deming replied that it was sale of water to the Town of Leicester mentioning Leicester is getting more but other towns are not yet on board.

Mr. Bennett then took a moment to explain the operation and maintenance of lines not being able to offset property taxes while discussing how expenses are calculated.

Mr. Richenberg continued to ask questions regarding PILOT payments and Attorney Campbell took the time to explain how the PILOT process works.

Q-Mr. Nagel asked if there was anything new on White Creek Solar?

Supervisor Deming replied that the Town has not yet been notified of anything.

Q-Mr. Richenberg then asked if there was any idea what kind of Covid funds are coming our way?

Supervisor Deming answered \$164,000 this year. When they are used, we can get additional \$164,000.

Q-Mr. Richenberg asked how the funds are being used?

Supervisor Deming replied that they are not currently being used but when they are, it can be for infrastructure and Covid related expenses.

Q-Mr. Richenberg asked how this will be reflected in the budget?

Mr. Bennett answered Mr. Richenberg's question by saying we have the funds in a bank but not knowing the parameters yet for use. From an accounting standpoint, it's a loan until it's justified. Reiterating that we're just not sure yet who will be using or benefitting from these funds adding the stipulation that funds are required to be returned if not used.

Q-Lastly, Mr. Richenberg noted on the revenue side, the Town approved the Anderson Rd add on.

Supervisor Deming clarified that the add on part of Anderson Rd. came out of the project using funds from USDA Rural Development.

Q-Mr. Richenberg asked where in the W/S Districts are the reflection of notices fees, legal/attorney fees and why should General fund have to pay the brunt of these fees?

Supervisor Deming stated that the legal and engineering fees are included in the loan debt we acquire.

Mr. Richenberg expressed that the answer provided was not acceptable to him.

Q-Henry Fuller- Mr. Fuller asked if he could have an explanation as to what Joint Youth Project is?

Supervisor Deming stated that line item was the allocation for the Summer Youth Recreation program held annually at York Central School for the children in the York-Leicester area. Mr. Deming additionally stated that the recreation program has not been held for the past 2 years due to Covid and this year's ongoing building project renovations at YCS.

Mr. Fuller then added a comment that he would like to see the Board give the community an accounting of monthly budgets bills so we don't have to ask for them.

Supervisor Deming asked Mr. Fuller if he got a copy while stating that a lot of people received them. Mr. Fuller replied that he had not.

At that time, Mr. Bennett then clarified that he believed what Mr. Fuller was referring to was the monthly reports given to the Board to review budgetary expenses/revenues and not the 2022 proposed budget.

Attorney Campbell then took a moment to further explain the escrow account that the Town requires solar developers to put money/funds up front prior to the start of a project for legal expenses.

Q-Mr. Richenberg then stated that the attorney's comment lead to him having an additional question, asking if the Board can tell the group what the breakdown was for paid legal/engineering costs were from the solar escrow accounts?

Supervisor Deming did not have the individual breakdown figures readily available this evening just the total amounts paid as reflected in the prior year's budget.

Q-Mr. Fuller then asked who keeps track of the escrow expenses?

Supervisor Deming stated that his Clerk Patti Barefoot, as well as the Board and himself track those accounts/expenses.

After no further questions....

RESOLUTION offered by Mr. Smith and seconded by Mrs. Parnell to adjourn the 2022 Budget hearing at 7:15pm. Voted on and approved, Yes-5, No-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia A. Barefoot

Patricia A. Barefoot
Dep. Town Clerk