

Regular Meeting of the Vestal Town Board November 5, 2014

The Regular Meeting of the Town Board of the Town of Vestal, County of Broome and the State of New York was held at the Town Hall, 605 Vestal Parkway West, Vestal, NY on November 5, 2014.

TOWN BOARD PRESENT:

Supervisor John Schaffer
Councilman Fran Majewski
Councilwoman Patty Fitzgerald
Councilwoman Sue Messina

ALSO ATTENDING: Town Attorney David Berger, Town Clerk Emil Bielecki, 1st Deputy Town Clerk Kathie Young, Comptroller Laura McKane, Recreation Planner Sue Jastran, Assistant Recreation Planner Michelle Tomancik-Teed, Library Board Vice-President Gordon Allen, and approximately 45 members of the general public.

Supervisor Schaffer called the Regular Meeting to order at **6:00 PM**, welcomed everyone and asked that all present join in the PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

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

Resolved the Minutes of the Regular Meeting on October 22, 2014 are approved.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public Hearing on Local Law “F” of the Year 2014 - A Local Law to Override the Tax Levy Limit Established in General Municipal Law 3-c.

Supervisor Schaffer offered *Proof of Posting* and *Affidavit of Publication* and then opened the Public Hearing regarding **Local Law “F” of the Year 2014**.

Section 1. Legislative Intent

It is the intent of this local law to override the limit on the amount of real property taxes that may be levied by the Town of Vestal pursuant to General Municipal Law § 3-c, and to allow the Town of Vestal to adopt a budget for the fiscal year 2015 that

Regular Meeting of the Vestal Town Board November 5, 2014

requires a real property tax levy in excess of the “tax levy limit” as defined by General Municipal Law § 3-c.

Section 2. Authority

This local law is adopted pursuant to subdivision 5 of General Municipal Law § 3-c, which expressly authorizes the town board to override the tax cap by the adoption of a local law approved by vote of sixty percent (60%) of the town board.

Section 3. Tax Levy Limit Override

The Town Board of the Town of Vestal, County of Broome is hereby authorized to adopt a budget for the fiscal year 2015 that requires a real property tax levy in excess of the amount otherwise proscribed in General Municipal Law § 3-c.

Section 4. Severability

If any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, or part of this Local Law or the application thereof to any person, firm or corporation, or circumstance, shall be adjusted by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unconstitutional, such order or judgment shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remainder thereof, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, or part of this Local Law or in its application to the person, individual, firm or corporation or circumstance, directly involved in the controversy in which such judgment or order shall be rendered.

Seeing or hearing no one else wishing to speak, Supervisor Schaffer closed the Public Hearing.

This local law will be acted upon, if necessary, at the time when the 2015 Budget is adopted.

Public Hearing on the 2015 Preliminary Budget

Supervisor Schaffer presented *Proof of Posting* and *Affidavit of Publication* for the Public Hearing regarding the 2015 Preliminary Budget.

Comptroller Laura McKane gave a brief explanation of how the tax levy cap is derived and noted that the percent of the cap changes from year to year. She then gave the following *Powerpoint* presentation summarizing the makeup of the 2015 Preliminary Budget for the Town of Vestal:


Regular Meeting of the Vestal Town Board

November 5, 2014

2015

TOWN OF VESTAL

Budget



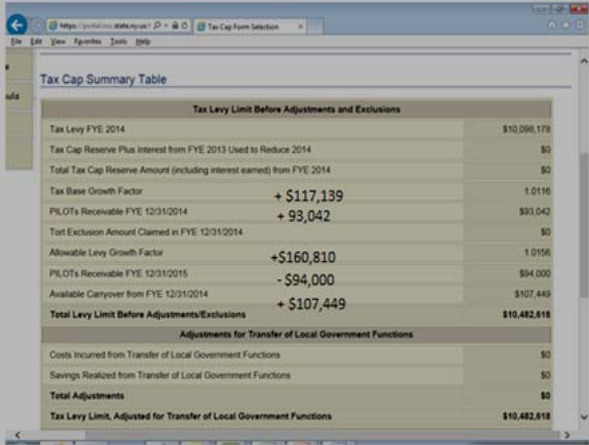
J. Schaffer November 5, 2014 1

Town of Vestal Tax Cap

Tax Levy Limit	\$10,482,618
Special District & DS Fund Proposed Tax Levy 2014	<u>\$ 2,265,784</u>
Balance of Levy Limited Available for General, Library & Highway Funds	\$ 8,216,834
Levy Per 2014 Preliminary Budget	<u>\$ 8,265,327</u>
Difference between Levy Limit & Proposed Levy	\$ (48,493)

Tax Levy per Preliminary Budget is over the levy limit

4



2015 Budget Summary

	Approx.
Spending Up 1.9%	\$312,000
Smaller Balances & Reserves	\$115,000
Revenue Down 1.9%	<u>\$ 61,000</u>
Shortfall in Funding	\$488,000

Translates to a 6.3% Increase in Tax Levy

5

TAX LEVY CAP SUMMARY

- The tax levy cap is determined by a complex formula
- Tax Cap limits total levy set by local government, not tax rate
- Local governments may not adopt a budget that requires a **tax levy** that exceeds the cap unless the governing board first adopts a local law (or resolution) to override the tax levy limit
- However, the formula can result in a levy that exceeds the prior years levy by more than 2 percent

2

SUMMARY OF GENERAL FUND SPENDING

	2014 Adopted	2015 Preliminary	Dollar Change	% Change
General Governmental Support	\$1,851,799	\$1,883,696	\$31,897	1.7%
Public Safety	\$3,354,203	\$3,308,883	-\$45,320	-1.4%
Health	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$0	0.0%
Transportation	\$403,920	\$391,986	-\$11,934	-3.0%
Economic Opportunity and Development	\$17,082	\$17,528	\$446	2.6%
Culture and Recreation	\$884,914	\$915,104	\$30,190	3.4%
Home and Community Services	\$13,155	\$11,997	-\$1,158	-8.8%
Unallocated Employee Benefits	\$3,600,845	\$3,671,480	\$70,635	2.0%
Debt Service	\$430,581	\$438,322	\$7,741	1.8%
Planned Additions to Reserves	\$35,798	\$35,798	\$0	0.0%
	\$10,593,695	\$10,676,292	\$82,697	0.8%

Regular Meeting of the Vestal Town Board

November 5, 2014

POLICE DEPARTMENT* 27% of GENERAL FUND

- Police budget is down 1.2%
- Staffing has declined due to attrition from 38 officers in 2009 to 32 currently.
- Approximate cost of a 1st year police officer is \$75,000.
- Police calls and arrests are increasing.
- Two new officers would add about \$.08 to the tax rate or \$8.25 per year to a home with a \$100,000 assessed value.

* Before Benefits

9

2015 Estimated Revenue

Total Before RPT \$8,377,808 down 61,000

- Mortgage Taxes (\$30,000)
- Sales Tax \$ 20,000
- Building Permits \$ 9,000
- Fines and Forfeited Bail \$14,000
- Chargebacks (special districts) (\$66,000)
- Picnic Permits \$ 4,000
- Sale of Equipment (\$ 5,000)
- Interest Earnings (\$ 4,000)

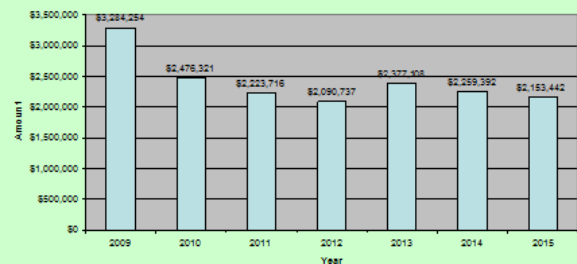
12

SUMMARY OF LIBRARY FUND SPENDING

	2014 Adopted	2015 Preliminary	Change	% Change
Library Operational Budget	\$554,389	\$551,372	-\$3,017	- .54%
Employee Benefits	\$121,914	\$122,804	\$890	0.73%
TOTAL	\$676,303	\$674,176	-\$2,127	-0.30%

10

Stable Financial Position Fund Balance History (2014 and 2015 Estimated)



Balances have stabilized at low range of Best Practices

13

SUMMARY OF HIGHWAY FUND SPENDING

	2014 Adopted	2015 Preliminary	Change	% Change
Refund-Real Property Taxes	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0	0.00%
General Repairs	\$1,658,825	\$1,731,118	\$72,293	4.40%
Improvements	\$521,590	\$521,590	\$0	0.00%
Bridge Repairs & Maint	\$500	\$500	\$0	0.00%
Machinery & Equipment	\$437,664	\$439,430	\$1,766	0.40%
Weeds & Brush	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0	0.00%
Snow & Ice Control	\$288,750	\$368,750	\$80,000	27.70%
Employee Benefits	\$1,244,800	\$1,298,800	\$54,000	4.34%
Debt Service	\$1,064,669	\$1,088,117	\$23,448	2.20%
TOTAL	\$5,218,798	\$5,450,305	\$231,507	4.40%

11

PRELIMINARY BUDGET TAX RATE

*Change per
\$1,000 of Assessment*

General Fund	\$.1400
Library Fund	\$(.0145)
Highway Fund	<u>\$.1027</u>
	\$.2572

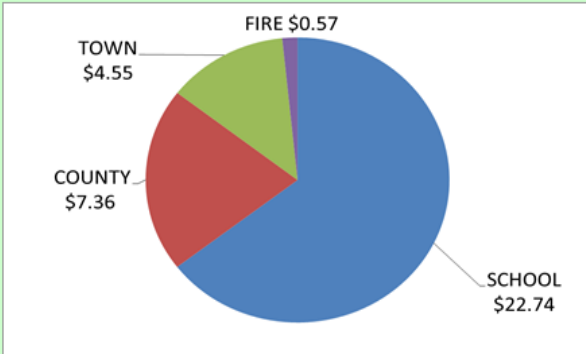
Tax increase with an assessment of \$100,000 would be:
\$25.72 annually or \$.49 per week

14

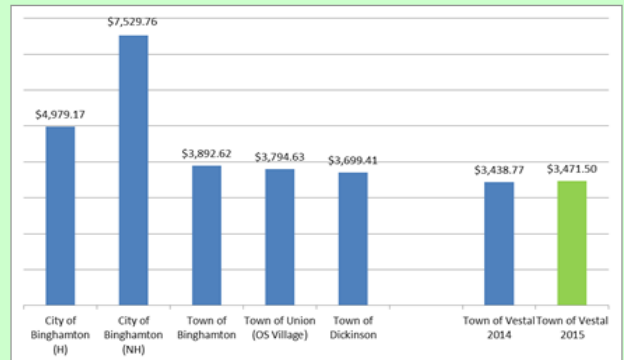
Regular Meeting of the Vestal Town Board

November 5, 2014

Summary of Your Tax Bills Per Thousand of Assessment



2014 Tax Comparisons on a Home with a \$100,000 FMV Town, County and School Taxes



YOUR TAX DOLLAR BREAKDOWN

- Vestal School \$.64
- Broome County \$.21
- Town of Vestal \$.13
- Vestal Fire Department \$.02

Total \$1.00

Consistent ratio for last three years or more

18

PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE 2015 PRELIMINARY BUDGET:

Five individual speakers expressed support for increasing library funding citing the following reasons:

- The line for book purchases and periodicals has been cut for several years and should be restored.
- The restored library aid from the County (\$24,000) should be applied to the library's operating budget, not to reduce the tax levy.
- The library is one of the Town's most valuable assets. The Library and the Rail Trail are two of the best things that Vestal has.
- The library is a great resource for young people and needs to stay open the required hours to be accredited.

Regular Meeting of the Vestal Town Board November 5, 2014

- Vestal is a very busy library. The demand for library programs is increasing. The summer program is critical for at-risk children.
- School libraries are shrinking and cannot substitute for services provided by a public library.
- The library should not be singled out for budget cuts when another department (IT) is adding additional hours.

Supervisor Schaffer stated that the library was not singled out for cuts. The budgetary reductions were spread out throughout the departments. Every effort was made to avoid cutting services. If the County restored the 50/50 sales tax split formula as promised, it would alleviate a lot of the financial stress the Town is facing. In the long run, he supports going to a countywide library district to spread out the cost of the service across a larger base.

Comptroller McKane noted that the library budget was funded at a level that should allow for a stable staffing level.

Four individual speakers expressed support for maintaining the parks playground programs citing the following reasons:

- The Town is changing and the parks program is becoming a more important benefit for many young families. It provides structure for many children during the summer.
- The parks programs are much more than just a babysitting service.
- There are many former summer employees who worked in the parks and recreation programs. They benefited greatly from the experience and continue to be strong supporters of the programs.
- The summer programs attract people to the Town.
- Summer recreation programs support working parents. It also allows students a chance to come back to their roots and have a summer job.

Supervisor Schaffer indicated that there are no plans to cut the parks programs in this budget but it is an area that we may need to look at in the future.

A speaker noted that he lives in the rural part of Vestal and he does not benefit from many of the services offered by the Town.

A speaker asked why the requested hiring of additional police officers is not reflected in the budget and why a place like Walmart does not pay for its own

Regular Meeting of the Vestal Town Board November 5, 2014

police protection. Supervisor Schaffer replied that the additional officers were not budgeted but we are providing the information to the public on the cost of hiring two additional officers. Councilman Majewki added that we need to plan ahead because it is expensive to add new police officers and it takes over 8 months of training before a new officer is ready for duty. We are putting this information out to get feedback from the public.

Councilwoman Messina noted that we may be losing more officers due to retirement. Theoretically we could be down six officers. Public safety is an important part of this community. We will need to have someone trained. The public needs to be aware of this information.

A speaker expressed strong objection to the Town subsidizing the out of town trips sponsored by the Vestal Senior Citizens Center. There are many things to do locally. This is frivolous spending and she resents it. The money can go to recreation so that the families don't have to pay for some of the activities.

A speaker asked why we have a tax cap if we are just going to exceed it. We should rely more on volunteers to reduce the cost of services. For example, many people would like to voluntarily contribute to the Library to purchase new books. We could reduce our Workers Comp costs by focusing more on reducing injuries. The taxes are too high forcing stable residents to move out. This invites slum lords to move in. We shouldn't take this lightly.

Comptroller McKane stated that we are anticipating a 15% increase in our Worker's Compensation costs. This is a result of increases in the cost of the insurance and our poor experience. We have a Worker's Comp PPO provider who works with the Town to get injured employees back to work faster.

A speaker expressed concern that we are slowly taking away everything that makes this a quality community and brings us together.

A speaker expressed overall objection to how the Town spends money. All departments should be asked to reduce their budgets by 5% and should be offered incentives for doing so. The constant budget transfers between departments shows that we are over budgeted. We need to adjust our expenditures to our revenues. We have wasted money on moving the Coalhouse and on litigation with Candlehouse and UHS. Also, the stores need to hire their own security. Supervisor Schaffer noted that most budget transfers are within departments.

Regular Meeting of the Vestal Town Board November 5, 2014

A speaker stated that the tax increases are hard and noted that some Town functions need to be pared back. The Highway Department is quite large for the size of our Town and should be reduced through attrition. There is still waste in many areas. Our library is old and outdated. Every school has a library. We can close the library and the Museum. The high taxes will turn most of our housing into rental properties.

A speaker cited the importance of maintaining our service and favors raising taxes slightly to keep them intact. Nothing is free. There is nothing surprising about municipalities raising their taxes if they show good stewardship. The Rail Trail brings in thousands of people to our Town. The community needs these things. Perhaps the solution is a Library taxing district. It would be done by proposition.

A speaker noted that Binghamton University should contribute to our Fire Department. They are a huge burden on the Vestal Volunteer Fire Department and the Town.

Upon closing this public hearing on the 2015 Town of Vestal Preliminary Budget, Supervisor Schaffer noted that he expects the Board to vote on the 2015 Final Budget at the Regular Meeting of the Town Board on Wednesday, November 19, 2014.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR (Agenda Items Only)

A speaker made the following comments about several agenda items:

- Wants to know the amount that the Town paid last year for disability and life insurance benefits.
- We should not be purchasing another truck. We need to share resources.
- We are replacing our computer equipment too frequently.
- Does the Town keep track of donations and how they are spent?

Supervisor Schaffer noted that the Town will save \$54,000 in capital project expenditures by the purchase of this military surplus vehicle. It will be converted to a salt truck. The current vehicle is rusted and cannot be repaired. The computer equipment needs to be replaced.

A speaker stated that some recyclers will pay to recycle certain computer equipment. He will provide the Town with information.

**Regular Meeting of the Vestal Town Board
November 5, 2014**

RESOLUTIONS & MOTIONS

Contract with Sun Life and Health - Life and Disability Insurance

R267-14 On a motion of Councilman Majewski, seconded by Councilwoman Messina, the following resolution was

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

Resolved to adopt the following resolution:

Whereas the town provides disability insurance and life insurance benefits to its full-time employees, elected officials and the town attorney pursuant to collective bargaining agreements and the Employee Handbook, and

Whereas the town sought competitive proposals from insurance carriers pursuant to the town's procurement policy to provide the same level of benefits; and

Whereas the lowest responsible and equivalent quote is from **Sun Life and Health Insurance Company**:

Now be it resolved to contract with Sun Life and Health Insurance Company to provide life insurance and disability insurance effective January 1, 2015.

Parks to Bid on Military Surplus Vehicle

R268-14 On a motion of Councilman Majewski, seconded by Councilwoman Fitzgerald, the following resolution was

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

Resolved for the Parks Superintendent to purchase one military surplus truck at a bid price not to exceed \$3,500. This vehicle would replace the salt truck currently being used by the Parks Department. The funding for this purchase would come from the Contingency line.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

ADOPTED Ayes 4 Majewski, Fitzgerald, Messina, Schaffer

Regular Meeting of the Vestal Town Board November 5, 2014

Nays 0

Resolved the **Consent Agenda** is approved as follows:

FINANCE: Messina/ Majewski

Receive and File:

Warrant Reports: 2014-43, 2014-43E, 2014-43L, 2014-43W, 2014-44, 2014-44E

PUBLIC SAFETY: Majewski/Messina

Donations Accepted for the Fire Department

R269-14 Authorization from the Board of Fire Commissioners to accept the following donations:

- **\$500.00 Donation** from **Citgo** for Equipment Purchase to be used in the Operation Line - F3410 4060 for purchase of Water Rescue equipment.
- **Cash Donations Totaling \$70.00:** Park Terrace Pre-School (\$25), Home-School Group (\$35), Anonymous Person (\$10).

These donations were received in support of providing fire prevention education and will go towards the Fire Prevention line F3410 4612 for education materials.

ADMINISTRATION: Fitzgerald/Messina

Obsolete Electronic Equipment to be Recycled

R270-14 Authorization for IT Director Dan Williams to dispose of items listed below which are no longer of any use to the Town. The materials will be recycled.

Printers

Xerox Phaser 8550 Serial #: pmt297338
Xerox Phaser 8550 Serial #: wyp337300
Xerox Phaser 8550 Serial II: wyn334441
Xerox 3030 Serial II: wyn334183

Servers

Dell Poweredge 2600 Service tag: 7SWPX41
Dell Poweredge 2600 Service tag: 8SWPX41
Dell Poweredge 2800 Service tag: 4J1NM91
Dell Poweredge 2800 Service tag: JFOYLB1
Dell Poweredge 750 Service tag: IOXPQ71

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

Regular Meeting of the Vestal Town Board November 5, 2014

CHAIR COMMENTS AND UPDATES

Councilwoman Fitzgerald stated that she inspected the truck that the Water Department recently purchased from Army Surplus. Everything is brand new. The purchase of these army vehicles is a great savings to the Town.

Councilman Majewski agreed that the purchase of these military surplus vehicles is a great deal for the Town. This vehicle is so new that some of the protective plastic coating still covers parts of the interior.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

A speaker noted that it would be very convenient to add more trash cans on some sections of the Rail Trail, particularly near the entrance area at Airborne Ave.

SUPERVISOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Public Hearing on the **2015 Special Districts Budget**: November 19, 2014 at 6:00 PM.
- **Leaf Pick Up** – Until snow falls. Place leaves along the curb but **AWAY FROM STORM DRAINS!** No yard waste or branches. For more information contact Highway Department 607-785-4616.
- **Winter Parking Reminder** – Parking of vehicles is prohibited on all Town and County roads in Vestal between the hours of **2:00 AM TO 6:00 AM** from December 1st through March 31st.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion of Councilman Majewski, seconded by Councilwoman Messina, the meeting was adjourned at 7:32PM. Carried unanimously.

Approved by _____ Emil J. Bielecki, Town Clerk