

VESTAL TOWN BOARD WORK SESSION MINUTES
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2013

In Attendance: Supervisor Schaffer, Board Members Fitzgerald, Majewski, Milkovich
Absent: Councilmen Marnicki

Also Attending: Comptroller Laura McKane, Library Director Carol Boyce, Librarian Jim Holley, IT Director Dan Williams, Town Clerk Emil Bielecki and Press reporter David Robinson

WORK SESSION - Supervisor Schaffer convened the meeting at 11:38 AM.

Vestal Library 2014 Budget Review

The Board engaged Library Director Carol Boyce and Librarian Jim Holley in a broad discussion of library issues and a line by line review of the proposed budget. The major focus of the discussion was an Executive recommendation to reduce County aid to the library by \$29,000.

Library Director Carol Boyce stated that she will be attending a Broome County Legislature hearing next week to make our case for restoring library aid. She asked Councilmen Milkovich and Majewski (Administration Committee) to join her at the meeting.

Councilman Milkovich indicated that he is still waiting for a response from the Library Director with a plan of action in the event the library aid is cut. The library should have a worst case scenario plan which could include cutting staff and reducing hours of operation.

Carol Boyce and Comptroller McKane noted that State law requires that the library be open a minimum number of hours (55) per week. We are already near that level. If we drop below that level, the State can withdraw our certification and we will no longer be eligible for state aid and face numerous other negative consequences.

Librarian Jim Holley added that losing the certification poses numerous risks and should be avoided at all cost. Locally, we are doing all that we can to raise money for the library. There is nowhere else to go in the budget to make up that shortfall except to drastically reduce our book purchases which strikes at the core of the library's mission.

During the line by line review of the budget the following additional items were addressed:

- The library is down one full time employee. The current staffing consists of 3 full time employees and 27 part time employees.
- The major increase in the wages line is due to the increase in the minimum wage.
- The electricity expense has been reduced as a result of the solar panel use.
- State aid is expected to remain at the current level.
- The Town's support for the library, as a percentage of the overall budget, has been dropping.
- The Four County Library System is an important resource for our operation.

Supervisor Schaffer asked what the impact would be if we pulled out of the Four County Library System. Librarian Jim Holley responded that it would be catastrophic. We depend on the 4 County System for our circulation system, our book loans and various support services. Libraries today are much more than just books. We offer access to information via numerous technologies and increasingly offer programming that the community depends on.

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Information Technology (IT) 2014 Budget Review

IT Director Dan Williams and Comptroller Laura McKane outlined the major items in the proposed operating budget for 2014:

- The vehicle that was obtained from the Police Department this year has transmission problems.
- The Department is working to centralize the control of cell phones and consolidate the various plans.
- Line 4060 (Operations) is up sharply due to the need to replace a lot of the old and failing equipment.
- Line 4064 (Disaster prevention) is up to replace some of the equipment needed to improve the reliability of our emergency back-up operations.
- The copiers in a number of departments will be going off-lease creating an uncertainty as to potential cost increases.

In the capital budget, Dan Williams identified three items for 2014: wireless backbone upgrade, website redesign and computer replacement.

- The wireless backbone upgrade will increase the speed and reliability of our network. The equipment that we have is not designed to handle both phone and data traffic. If we don't encounter serious bandwidth issues, the upgrade should have a useful life of up to 5 years.
- We are looking at a new vendor to update and improve our website and to host it at an outside location so that it is still accessible when our servers go down.
- The computer replacement is part of a routine cycle to replace old computers on a regular basis. Most of the new computers will be Dell computers that have a much smaller footprint.

Comptroller McKane asked the Board to consider funding smaller items such as the website redesign in the operating budget to avoid the various costs associated with borrowing.

Councilman Milkovich asked the IT Director if everyone who has a computer and/or a cellphone, particularly a smartphone, need one. IT Director Williams responded that he is not in a position to answer that question, but would try do such an analysis if directed to do so.

Comptroller McKane reminded the Board that the Tentative 2014 Town Budget has to be filed in the Clerk's office by September 30th and she still needs some additional direction from the Board on a number of unresolved items.

The Work Session was adjourned at 1:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Emil Bielecki, Town Clerk