

**VESTAL TOWN BOARD WORK SESSION MINUTES**  
**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2013 – AFTERNOON**

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

Also Attending: Comptroller Laura McKane, Police Chief John Butler, Town Assessor Mark Minoia, Deputy Assessor Colleen Zube, Town Clerk Emil Bielecki and one news media reporter.

**WORK SESSION** - Supervisor Schaffer convened the meeting at 11:40 AM.

**Police Department 2014 Budget Review**

Police Chief John Butler noted that the proposed budget for 2014 is essentially unchanged except for increases in the lines that are contractually mandated and out of his control. During the line by line review of the budget, the Police Chief highlighted several items including:

- There are still some issues with dead spots in the cellular communication network, but there is talk at the County level of installing a 180 foot cell tower in Vestal.
- In the last few years, the Department is down 4 officers. The Department currently has 34 officers. One officer has recently announced his intention to retire. In addition to back-filling that position, he is asking for one additional police officer.
- The Department has 4 detectives. All detectives work the first (day) shift.
- We have done well in managing overtime.
- Response time is always a major concern due to the sprawling nature of the Town.
- The Department plans to replace 3 vehicles in 2014 with new Chevrolet Tahoes purchased under state contract. With the new Tahoes, we may be able to reduce the vehicle maintenance line.
- We are working with our IT Department to change the cell phone plan. This should result in some savings. Patrolman no longer have Town issued cell phones.

Councilman Milkovich expressed an initial objection to the back-filling of an officer position and the hiring of an additional officer. He asked the Police Chief to provide additional justification of need. Also, he suggested that the Police Department should explore the feasibility of purchasing gasoline off-site through a credit card system.

Councilman Majewski noted that there is a trend toward the use of alternative fuels in government service vehicles and asked the Police Chief explore the feasibility of moving in that direction.

**Town Assessor's Office 2014 Budget Review**

Town Assessor Mark Minoia provided the Board with various reports connected with the activities of his Office. In the discussion with the Board, several topics were addressed including the following:

- The Town was again recognized by the State for its efforts to provide property owners with fair and equitable assessments in the 2013 roll. We continue to be at 100% of equalization.
- About 38% of the Town's assessed value is tax exempt, the vast majority is represented by Binghamton University. This is a much smaller amount than is commonly believed.
- The negative impact on the Town from the UHS court ruling is much smaller because the property was carried on the rolls as a partial assessment.
- The Assessor's Office continues to face a heavy workload in dealing with the adjustments that need to be made as a result of the damage from the 2011 flooding.
- When comparing the tax level with other similar municipalities in Broome County, Vestal

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comes out as a best value.

Comptroller Laura McKane noted that the total assessed value of the Town has decreased. This will have a negative impact on the Town's tax rate. Even if the Town's 2014 budget came in at a 0% percent change, the taxes rate would need to increase approximately 1% just to make up for the reduced valuation.

Town Assessor Minoia noted that his budget has no increases from last year except for the contractual salary increases.

The Work Session was adjourned at 1:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Emil Bielecki, Town Clerk