

Mayor's Budget Message

Here's a quick list of progress made over the last year or so:

- Road improvements including the completion of chip sealing Bath Township Road and Woodard Road
- Another difficult and challenging round of winter conditions handled expertly by our DPW team and our winter road contractor.
- Completed review of our Land Use Regulations by our trustees with a new revision passed into law.
- Installation of new flag pole and memorial stone with brass plaque at Bell Park.

Our current financial picture – the summary

Our total assessed valuation went up by \$286,682 for a total assessed valuation of \$30,190,214 allowing the village to gain \$507.43 cents (equal to 1% tax increase on our levy). This will allow us to continue our streak of having no increase in our village property tax rate, we remain at \$1.777 per 1,000 of assessed valuation. We have continued the strategy established by former Mayor Mitch Levinn of using state highway funding, mostly from the CHIPS program, to fund our capital improvement projects. This has proven to be a fiscally prudent way to go about paying for these expensive projects. This year, however, we did two roads in one budget cycle which exhausted resources. This was intentionally done since we will save money in the long run. We continue to use our annual cookie contest to provide funding for services and projects throughout the village. That leaves our other main funding streams – state AIM, county sales and mortgage taxes, and village property tax – to pay for our “regular operations” including road maintenance, village boards and departments, and office expenses. This strategy has kept our finances in check while providing gradual, affordable upgrades to our infrastructure and services. We have managed to keep our actual expenses in line with (or below) our actual revenue, allowing our annual carryover (the “unexpended balance” line) to remain healthy. The “unexpended balance” is essentially our reserve, providing the cushion against unexpected expenses or extreme weather emergencies while keeping our tax levy near constant.

What changes are reflected in the proposed budget?

Highlighted changes in proposed budget:

A 2.5% COLA for DPW superintendent, deputy DPW superintendent, Clerk, and Treasurer.

An increase in our attorney line to reflect any potential law suits via code enforcement issues.

A reduction in the code enforcement line to reflect changes in the department.

Conclusion

While residents on roads that have been converted from gravel to double chip seal surfaces have seen an immediate improvement in their quality of life, we are starting to see some budgetary benefits from our road improvement program, the single biggest investment we've made over the years. Road maintenance expenses are decreasing as dust control and grading are not required on our roads with hard surfaces, and the annual muddy road phenomenon that was a spring ritual is becoming a fading memory for those on upgraded roads. Soon, we will complete our initial hard surface upgrades and shift to resealing the upgraded roads as needed, probably in the order that we applied the initial chip seal. I think we should continue our slow-but-steady pace of road upgrades, doing a major project every year or two. The proposed budget reflects that continuing effort. Similarly, our policy of organic growth of programs, using volunteers and fundraising to seed new efforts, has been effective for trying new things and appropriately resourcing programs as they show promise. I think we should continue along the same path, expanding new programs that prove themselves worthy and scaling back programs that do not gain traction. The Bell Park and the Senior Advocacy activities are two efforts to which we have traction. Efforts supporting historic preservation and other projects being pursued by our Historian are still building and hopefully will grow into long term programs we can support.

Our village remains in good fiscal condition and we have exciting projects that will improve our overall quality of life here in East Nassau.