

Mayor's Budget message
For the 4 March 2018 Budget Workshop

The year in review

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

- Continuing Senior Advocacy Committee efforts:
 - the ever-expanding inventory of durable medical equipment has become a great resource for the village community and beyond;
 - there has been much recognition of committee success by groups in neighboring communities hoping to emulate the effort;
 - effective advocacy on behalf of a village senior resident resulted in significant funding assistance for home and heating improvements;
 - the committee's early summer yard sale has quickly become an annual tradition and community gathering in addition to a source of funding for the committee.
- Road improvements including completion of base improvements on eastern end of Hayes Road and rebuilding of the apron at the bottom of Gardner Hill
- New treasurer on board and up to speed
- Many periods of challenging winter conditions handled expertly by our DPW team and our winter road contractor
- Activation of our long-dormant ZBA with consideration of a complicated case involving a dog kennel and resulting in a well thought-out permitting scheme that effectively balanced the owners' and neighbors' needs.
- Complete review of our Land Use Regulations by our trustees with a proposed revision soon to be available for public consideration.
- Establishment of a Youth effort, with seed funding from our annual cookie contest

Our current financial picture – the summary

We have continued with our strategy of using state highway funding, mostly from the CHIPS program, to fund our capital improvement projects and using our annual Cookie Contest to provide initial funding for new committees, services, and projects. 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?

There are few changes in the proposed budget:

- The only salary changes proposed in the budget are for the Public Works Department and for the Village Clerk. I have proposed moving the DPW Superintendent's salary to \$4,400 (from \$4,200) and the Deputy Superintendent's salary to \$2,000 (from \$1,800). Percentage-wise, this is a significant increase (4% and 11% respectively), but in actual dollars, these positions are still very modestly compensated for the effort required and very low compared to the salaries on statewide salary surveys for similar positions. This increase is an acknowledgement of the significant effort and commitment our DPW staff has demonstrated. I have proposed increasing the Clerk's salary to \$2,600 (from \$2,500). Again, this is a significant increase percentage-wise (4%), but small in actual dollars for a critical role for the village that has not seen an increase in at least 10 years. Also, I have nudged the hourly compensation rate for our attorney up to \$120/hour (from \$115/hour) – which is still well below the market rate for the excellent work he does for our village.
- There is \$1,000 in expected expenses in the Celebrations line this year. We always budget something there, but never expect to spend it. This year, however, is our 20th anniversary and we have designated the annual Cookie Contest as a celebration of our anniversary. So, I expect we will actually spend some money for that effort. Most of what will be spent on the celebration will be offset by revenue earned by the Cookie Contest itself.
- Our DPW team expects to be able apply a hard surface (double chip seal) to Woodard Road and Bath Township Road this summer. This effort will be funded mostly by our annual CHIPS and PaveNY allocation.
- There are no new programs proposed to be funded from our tax revenue.
- The proposed budget has no increase in our tax rate (\$1.77/\$1,000) and a small increase in the overall levy (less than 1%) which reflects the increase in assessed valuation in the village. The tax rate has stayed the same or gone down every year this decade and remains substantially below the rate paid by the rest of the town for the highway services to which the village does not contribute (\$3.34/\$1,000). The net effect is that living in the village saves taxpayers \$1.57 per \$1,000 in assessed valuation or over \$230 for a property assessed at \$150,000.

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 on 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 committed long term support. 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. And the newly-imagined Youth Program is just starting out and we look forward to having that blossom into a resource that will be of great benefit to our community.

I am happy to conclude that our village remains on a firm footing budget-wise and we have great prospects for improving our services and the overall quality of life in our community.