

## VILLAGE OF CORNWALL-ON-HUDSON BOARD OF TRUSTEES

January 24, 2011

The Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees was called to order at 6:00 P.M., at 325 Hudson St., Cornwall-on-Hudson, N.Y.

The following Board Members were in attendance:

Mayor Joseph J. Gross  
Trustee Barbara Gosda  
Trustee Mark J. Edsall  
Trustee Douglas Vatter  
Trustee James P. Kane

Also present were: DPW Superintendent David Halvorsen, Water Superintendent Robert June, Police Chief Paul Weber, Village Treasurer Stephen Auffredou, and Village Clerk Jeanne Mahoney

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **ELECTION INSPECTOR APPOINTMENTS**

The Clerk requested the following be appointed Election Inspectors for the upcoming March 15th election at a rate of \$75 per day:

Margaret Flint, as Chairperson, and Susan Ostrander

And, as Alternate Inspectors:

Margaret Ann Dame, and Edward Flynn

In addition, appoint Ray Torracca, as Voting Machine Inspector at a rate of \$150 per machine.

Trustee Gosda moved to accept these appointments which was seconded by Trustee Vatter and carried by a vote of 5 Ayes and 0 Nays.

#### **ELECTION RESOLUTION**

Trustee Gosda made a motion to set the annual registration day for the Village of Cornwall-on-Hudson for on Saturday, March 5, 2011 from 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM in the Board Room of the

Village Hall, 325 Hudson St. The motion was seconded by Trustee Edsall and carried by a vote of 5 ayes and 0 nays.

## 2011-2012 PRELIMINARY BUDGET DISCUSSION – PUBLIC COMMENT

Fire Department: Treasurer Auffredou reported that the budget request for the fire department is 35% higher than last year. Trustees Vatter and Edsall spoke with the Fire Chief today. They were told that the fire department can work with last years' budget numbers. No one spoke with the Chief during the budget preparation process so he "aimed high" and included some equipment and vehicles that need to be replaced. Trustee Gosda mentioned there is an allocation for fire house mechanic. We have the Village mechanic available to the fire department as well. Discussion followed.

Trustee Gosda read some prepared comments with regard to the preliminary budget. She stated that the Board met with department heads last week to discuss their proposed budgets. At the time, there was a 25.7 % projected increase in the preliminary budget. Budget cuts were never discussed, and the Board needs to make difficult decisions "in short order". She proposes that each department, except the police department, be asked to reduce their budget by 5% and then by 10%. They should then "back those adjustments into their line items". She is eliminating the police department because Chief Weber has already offered a 30% reduction in his budget, and a removed a new police car from his proposal. She wants to see these revised budgets to the Treasurer by noon on Wednesday so he can incorporate them into the "bottom line of the Village Budget". In addition, negotiations have been ongoing with the PBA and CSEA, and "it is not going well". To her it is "very frustrating and upsetting to think that these 2 unions aren't negotiating with us in a timely fashion, so that we can resolve these issues and we could have had a positive impact on this budget". In conclusion, the Governor is considering a "2% cap" on property taxes, "that will seriously impact us in the future".

Trustee Gosda made a motion that department heads, excluding the police department, take their budgets and reduce the bottom line by 5% and then back it into their line items where they determine it can possibly happen. In addition, go to 10% and do the same thing.

Lengthy discussion on the preliminary budget, as presented this evening, followed with the Treasurer.

Trustee Edsall suggested that if the Board is contemplating more input from our departments and more adjustments to the preliminary budget, we should now listen to public comment before going any further.

Mayor Gross opened the floor for public comment at 6:40 PM.

Jan Smith of 45 Clark Avenue stated that salary and benefits are what "drives any of these budgets". The Governor and his staff have taken a "5% hit". With regard to union negotiations, there should be no consideration given to salary increases. Since the Governor can afford to take a "5% hit, most certainly our own employees should stay flat". The same goes for benefits, why

aren't our employers paying a percentage? Residents cannot continue to afford to pay for these kinds of expenses which go up every year.

Trustee Vatter replied that that the Board must deal with budget effects from the "triboro amendment" which gives employees step increases along with current wages, longevity increases, etc.

Trustee Gosda added that the employees have not been given a salary increase, they will "end up with a retro".

Jaweed Chaudhary, owner of DB Mart, expressed appreciation that the Board is working to cut operating expenses without cutting personnel. Security of the Village is a "paramount" concern and our police officers should know the residents. A part-time police force does not make sense and he wants to keep our full-time officers.

Mayor Gross replied that this preliminary budget does not reflect the "cut of the full-time officers".

Star Shadow of 7 Derby Lane stated that the Village has 2 full-time police officers now and asked if the issue has been resolved and these two officers will stay. It is in our best interest to keep the full time positions.

Mayor Gross replied that they are in this current draft budget and the Board has "not passed any resolution to make any changes".

Doug Land of 60 Deer Hill Road stated he is having trouble reading and following the preliminary budget. It would be helpful and "cleaner" if combined items were separated.

Mayor Gross replied that the Board is working with a new Treasurer this year and he brings a "departure from previous years' formats".

Trustee Edsall agrees with and endorses Mr. Land's comments. If the preliminary budget showed each departments total operating costs, total debt, and grand total it would certainly make it much easier to follow.

Rich Reeves – 7 Derby Lane asked how department heads would account for snow emergencies, water main breaks if the budgets were cut by 5%.

Trustee Gosda replied that they would "adjust that accordingly". The Board may be faced with an increase when the budget is voted on Thursday and they need "someplace to look". That is her reason to move ahead with the 5% and 10%.

Mayor Gross replied that we have no way of knowing what weather related emergencies may occur. We all do the best we can with what we have. Department heads do have the advantage of "sharing from one line to another" as the year goes on.

Ronald Tulloch – 15 Stillman Avenue asked what happens if the budget is not finalized by the set timeline. He also asked if the Board has looked into retirement incentives and then not filling that position.

Clerk Mahoney replied that the first budget presented on December 31<sup>st</sup> would become the budget, no vote required.

Trustee Vatter replied that the issue has been looked at and determined that Village employees are “not that highly paid” and no dollar incentive is there.

Mayor Gross added that we have a “relatively young work force”.

Brigid Flynn of 28 Andrews Street asked what kind of effect foreclosures here in the Village are having on our budget, and if so, to what percentage.

Mayor Gross stated that we do not have figures in the Village, but delinquencies in utility bill payments are increasing. He further stated that if buildings are being foreclosed upon because people cannot afford to sustain them, we will face more rental properties. Rental properties can have a detrimental effect on neighborhoods.

Trustee Vatter stated that the Village is currently made whole by the County. In the event everybody foreclosed, we would still get our property taxes from the County. If there are declining property values that will phase in over time.

Hearing nothing further, Mayor Gross closed public comment at 6:58 PM.

Trustee Gosda repeated her motion that department heads, excluding the police department, take their budgets and reduce the bottom line by 5% and then back it into their line items where they determine it can possibly happen. In addition, go to 10% and do the same thing. These revised budgets should be provided to the Village Treasurer by 12:00 PM this Wednesday.

Water Superintendent June stated that when it comes to places he “can actually make cuts”, he is essentially looking at 4 separate line items. In the current budget, he has been able to keep expenses low because he has “opted to put things off” (i.e. projects that should be done) to try to get us into a better financial position. Department heads have brought “flat line budgets” to the Board. The proposed increase is for property tax not water rents. The water budget is not part of the general fund.

Trustee Gosda amended her motion to also exclude the water department. Mayor Gross seconded motion.

Trustee Edsall stated that he thinks any time looking for reductions is worth looking at, but he questions the reality of the ability for those “non-discretionary items to absorb either a 5 or 10%

overall decrease”. Trustee Gosda is looking for a percentage based on the total which is where he believes the defect is. This may just be an exercise in futility.

Discussion followed.

Trustee Vatter stated that he doesn't feel we should rush. If cuts are necessary, the Board can decree a percentage and work it out later.

The Mayor called the motion, as amended and second on the floor which resulted in a vote of 4 Ayes, and 1 Nay (Vatter).

Treasurer Auffredou asked for clarification on the Revenue Anticipation Notes (RAN's). His preliminary budget calls for 100% pay down on all RAN's.

Trustee Edsall stated in his opinion, the water rates should not increase and the payoff on water fund RAN's should be maximized. If we can pay down 80% this year, that “is a huge step forward”. It will show users that we are fiscally responsible using money made from last year's rate increase and not asking for another increase. With regard to the general budget, we should leave the RAN pay down amount as a “variable” dependent upon the resulting percentage in order to keep the tax increase under control.

Trustee Gosda stated in her opinion the water rate should not increase because it went up dramatically last year.

Trustee Vatter also would like to make any necessary adjustments to the pay down of water fund RAN's to allow a zero percent rate increase.

Trustee Edsall reported that there are some improvements needed to the treatment system at the Sewer Plant that serves both the Town and Village. It will affect our obligation to pay a percentage of the operating cost to the Town. These improvements are DEC mandated and failure to comply will result in fines.

Discussion followed regarding reformatting changes requested by Board members with the Village Treasurer.

Having concluded the business set before them, Trustee Vatter moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:23 P.M. which was seconded by Trustee Edsall and upon a vote of 5Ayes and 0 Nays, the meeting was adjourned.