

Village of Lewiston reviewing budget: Trustees considering 20-cent tax increase

BY JOSHUA MALONI
GM/Managing Editor

The Village of Lewiston Board has begun working on the next fiscal year budget, and trustees are considering a 20-cent tax increase – to a rate of \$8.164858 per \$1,000 of assessed property valuation.

While that might sound steep, Mayor Anne Welch said the change would only result in an extra \$30 for a property valued at \$150,000.

“I think we should raise taxes, because people realize that everything goes up every year,” she said at a work session on Monday. “It’s not like we can stay the same.”

She added, “You’ve got to raise the taxes a little bit every year to stay with everything. People expect it. Everybody knows – when you go to the store, you go to the gas station – everything has gone up. We pay more for everything now. The gas, the oil, whatever we use. They have to pay more. Asphalt is astronomical. To stay with whatever we have to pay, we need to raise taxes.”

Welch noted, “The years that I was clerk, the board sat there and said, ‘Well, we’re not going to raise taxes. We’re not going to raise taxes.’ I kept saying, ‘The next person who comes in here is going to get slammed.’ ...

“You can’t do that. You have to raise accordingly. ... It catches up.”

Draft budget by the numbers

Appropriations are expected to be \$5,444,091, with revenues pegged at \$4,655,322.

Even with a tax increase, the Village Board needs to approve the use of \$788,769 in appropriated fund balance to square the books (\$754,675 in general fund balance plus \$853 in sewer fund balance and \$33,241 in water fund balance).

Last year at this time, trustees anticipated using \$648,710 in appropriated fund balance, plus \$18,792 for the sewer. To date, only \$363,656.25 has been used – and Treasurer Stephanie Longwell said, “At this point, the village is anticipating all revenues to come in and not to use any more fund balance.”

Additional budget highlights include:

•**The total estimated budget** of \$5,444,091 is an increase of \$676,517 from 2023-24. By contrast, the current budget called for \$4,767,574, an increase of \$277,689.

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•Expenses

√ The general fund is \$4,356,871, an increase of \$474,411. By contrast, the current budget called for \$3,882,460 in general fund expenses, an increase of \$265,505.

√ The water fund is \$559,793, an increase of \$145,115. By contrast, the current budget called for \$414,678 in water funding, an increase of \$3,748.

√ The sewer fund is \$527,427, an increase of \$56,991. By contrast, the current budget called for \$470,436 in sewer funding, an increase of \$7,436.

•Water and sewer rates

√ The water rate remains the same, at \$4.03 per 100 cubic feet of usage.

√ The sewer rate also remains the same, at \$4.79 per 100 cubic feet of usage.

•Total debt payments

Total debt payments remain flat at \$242,763.90. This includes bond payments for the new Department of Public Works garage additions.

•Revenues

√ The total revenue stream is \$4,655,322, an increase of \$555,250. By contrast, the current budget predicted \$4,100,072 in revenue, an increase of \$233,868.

Revenue includes:

√ Total general revenue is \$3,602,196, an increase of \$368,446 from 2023-24.

√ \$558,940 in water fees, an increase of \$144,262.

√ \$494,186 in sewer fees, an increase of \$42,542.

√ With the rate increase to \$8.164858 per \$1,000, real property taxes would net \$1,312,345.

What changed?

Some of the new and notable expenses for 2024-25 include \$100,000 earmarked for electrical

upgrades within the Red Brick Municipal Building; \$100,000 for bathroom upgrades at the Red Brick gymnasium; \$72,000 more in debt service bond principal; \$20,000 extra for tree-trimming; \$10,000 for asphalt at Academy Park; \$7,000 for new siding at the “Little Yellow House” on Center Street; an increase of \$6,500 in the price of July 4 fireworks; and \$5,000 for the Historical Association of Lewiston’s museum roof repair.

On the revenue side, Longwell anticipates a \$300,000 increase in sales taxes (this budget’s \$900,000 projection was exceeded in just 10 months); and \$5,000 more in each of Lewiston Landing fees, property rental interest, and building permits.

Elected leaders also approved a 20-cent property tax increase for the 2023-24 budget.

Trustees have scheduled a public hearing on the 2024-25 budget for 6 p.m. Monday, April 15, at the Red Brick, 145 N. Fourth St. The board intends to adopt the budget at that evening’s regular meeting.

The new fiscal year begins June 1.

In other news

Also at Monday’s work session, trustees approved a request made by Emery Simon to put up a temporary tent at the Lewiston Stone House for the summer season. The spectator space will measure 30 feet by 45 feet, and it will be fenced by large concrete blocks (2 feet by 2 feet by 6 feet) for patron safety.

This action is consistent with board votes from past years – though a caveat was added: Simon must add two publicly accessible fire extinguishers.

IN THE NEWS



New Quicklee’s plaza sign installed

Motorists on the thruway passing by the Porter-Packard exit will now see a large pole sign for the new Quicklee’s travel center plaza. The marker, which denotes a Tim Hortons and a truck and bus wash, was installed on Thursday.

The Porter Road site also includes a gas station and is situated next to ALDI and across from Wendy’s.

Niagara Falls Bocce Club set to start again

The Niagara Falls Bocce Club’s new season will begin

Wednesday, May 15.

Presently, the men’s and mixed leagues have openings for new members and teams. Email jimmanuse@gmail.com for information on the men’s league or joanr@roadrunner.com for information about the mixed league.

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Hidden causes of ill health

Since World War II and the 1950’s campaign “Better Living through Chemistry”, the bodies of the ensuing generations have been bombarded with thousands of toxic chemicals and processed food resulting in an overall decline of health in our country.

One way we can decrease the toxic load is to avoid chemicals in the food we eat such as artificial colors/ flavors, preservatives, pesticides and artificial sweeteners. Another way is to use natural cleaners that do not have toxic petroleum products or chlorine in them.

Artificial fragrances in your home, body products, air fresheners, scented candles, cleaning and laundry products have been linked to respiratory, hormonal, skin and nervous system conditions, just to name a few. One breathes these in 24/7, if in your clothes and bedding. Of the 5,000 different chemicals used in fragrance products, less than 20% have been tested and reported as toxic. Many of those chemicals that have been tested are regulated by the federal government as hazardous materials. The remaining chemicals have not been toxicity tested, so the health effects and regulatory potential are unknown.

A Rule of Thumb is “Never put anything on our body that you couldn’t eat or drink safely.” There are many safe, non-toxic cleaning and body products now available, so read the labels at your grocery or health food store or online.

Rose Chiropractic, P.C. is a natural health care practice focused on health improvement through Nutrition Response TestingSM and chiropractic, located at 435 Ridge St., Lewiston. New patients are welcome. Call (716)754-9039 for your personal program to improved health.

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