

Village of Lewiston eyeing tax increase

Trustees begin to shape FY 2023-24 budget

BY JOSHUA MALONI
GM/Managing Editor

Trustees in the Village of Lewiston held a public work session Monday to begin shaping the fiscal year 2023-24 budget. At the meeting, board members discussed raising the tax rate 20 cents – to \$7.964858 per \$1,000 of assessed property valuation. For a house appraised at \$100,000, a homeowner would be charged roughly \$20 more under this new tax rate.

Treasurer Stephanie Longwell presented the board with five different tax rate options, from not raising taxes and needing \$680,688 in appropriated fund balance, all the way up to the maximum tax rate (\$8.03), and pulling \$638,425 from the reserves. Welch and trustees Vic Eydt, Nick Conde and Tina Coppins said they prefer the 20-cent tax rate increase. Trustee Dan Gibson was excused from the meeting, but succinctly summarized the board's opinion afterward: "Although

the words 'tax increase' is very unpopular, sometimes it is necessary. In my tenure as a village trustee, taxes have only been raised three times, and were minimal. This gives the village working capital for projects such as rebuilding the infrastructure. It also assures the high level of service is maintained that our taxpayers receive and deserve." The total estimated budget is \$4,767,574, with revenues projected at \$4,100,072. So, even with a tax rate increase, the budget calls

for \$648,710 in appropriated fund balance to square the books. Last year at this time, the general fund's total fund balance was \$2,049,854. Of that total, the general fund's unassigned fund balance was \$1,256,090, which represented approximately 40.4% of the 2022 general fund expenditures. The water account had a fund balance of \$34,651, while the sewer line had a fund balance of \$288,997. Trustees approved a 2022-23 budget with a flat tax rate of \$7.76.

That proposal called for \$623,681 from the appropriated fund balance. Actual gains and losses to date are projecting favorably, however, and no fund pull is expected. The budget is expected to be approved in April, ahead of the next fiscal year's June 1 start date. A public hearing on the budget is slated for 6 p.m. Monday, April 17, as part of the Board of Trustees' monthly meeting at the Red Brick Municipal Building.

Among the proposed budget highlights:

- The **total estimated budget** of \$4,767,574 is an increase of \$277,689 from the 2022-23 budget.
 - ✓ General fund – \$3,882,460, an increase of \$265,505
 - ✓ Water fund – \$414,678, an increase of \$3,748
 - ✓ Sewer fund – \$470,436, an increase of \$7,436
 - ✓ Revenue – \$4,100,072, an increase of \$233,868
- Water and sewer rates**
 - ✓ Water rate remains the same, at \$4.03 per 100 cubic feet of usage
 - ✓ Sewer rate also remains the same, at \$4.79 per 100 cubic feet of usage
 - ✓ Appropriated fund balance to balance the budget from sewer fund: \$18,792
- Top 5 expense items** – all are essential services
 - ✓ Sewer treatment – \$312,610
 - ✓ Fire protection – \$440,973 (\$360,473 comes from the Town of Lewiston)
 - ✓ Water supply – \$348,940
 - ✓ Police protection – \$284,004 (budgeted

- for \$304,004)
 - ✓ Employee benefits – \$647,588 – this includes health insurance, retirement, self-insurance compensation (through Niagara County), Medicare and FICA tax.
 - ✓ In addition, there would be a new employee in the Red Brick Municipal Building, who may work as many as 35 hours per week cleaning and maintaining offices/playground equipment, at a rate of between \$18 and \$20 per hour.
- A further look at the proposed budget reveals:
 - Notable expenses/increases:**
 - ✓ Employee benefits total: \$647,588, an increase of \$100,889
 - ✓ Firefighting contracts: \$440,973, an increase of \$10,279
 - ✓ Employee benefits/hospitalization: \$354,100, an increase of \$52,175
 - ✓ Debt service: \$158,280, an increase of \$10,280
 - ✓ Clerk/treasurer personnel: \$147,991, an increase of \$18,877
 - ✓ Firefighting service awards: \$90,000, an

- increase of \$10,000
 - ✓ Employee benefits/retirement: \$95,500, an increase of \$15,740
 - ✓ Employee benefits/employee flex plan: \$93,000, an increase of \$24,021
 - ✓ Central garage personnel: \$74,770, an increase of \$12,109
 - ✓ Red Brick building and grounds: \$42,000 – new expense
 - ✓ Short-term rentals personnel, supplies and postage: \$38,500 – new expense
 - ✓ Board of Trustees: \$29,370, an increase of \$2,270
 - ✓ Mayor: \$11,280, an increase of \$900
- Department of Public Works:**
 - ✓ Transportation: \$666,059, an increase of \$17,678
 - ✓ Refuse and garbage: \$150,536, an increase of \$5,045
 - ✓ Parks: \$83,065, an increase of \$7,830
 - ✓ Beautification: \$65,895, an increase of \$1,000
 - ✓ Recycling: \$60,556, an increase of \$2,671
- Recreation Department:**
 - ✓ Personnel: \$102,220, an increase of \$4,865

- Outstanding debt payments for 2023-24:** \$223,188.28
- Total general revenue:** \$3,233,750, an increase of \$241,476
 - \$414,678 in water fees (\$3,748 increase) and \$451,644 in sewer fees (\$11,356 decrease)
- Total revenue plus water and sewer fees:** \$4,100,072
- Notable revenues/increases:**
 - ✓ Property taxes: \$1,273,499, an increase of \$40,578
 - ✓ Real property rentals: \$115,000, an increase of \$15,000
 - ✓ Sales tax: \$90,000, an increase of \$10,000
 - ✓ Mortgage tax: \$70,000, an increase of \$10,000
 - ✓ Cell tower royalties: \$30,000, an increase of \$10,000
 - ✓ Sewer treatment total: \$374,910, a savings of \$4,496

IN THE NEWS

New York Power Authority fishing piers open for 2023 season

NYPA fishing facilities, including the fishing pier at the base of the New York Power Authority's Robert Moses Niagara Hydroelectric Power Plant, are now open for the season.

The fish cleaning station and handicap access elevator at the dam site will also be available provided that temperatures remain above freezing.

NYPA said, "Lack of ice in the Niagara River allowed for the early opening of the pier, however it will be closed in sub-freezing temperatures or icy conditions."

The fishing piers near the Upper Mountain Fire Co. at the Lewiston Reservoir and at the water intakes along the upper Niagara River are also open for the season.

All are open daily, from dawn to dusk, and are admission free.

At the Robert Moses Niagara Hydroelectric Power Plant, parking is available near the

pier and at the top of the hill next to the road that provides access to the pier.

For information on the fishing pier, call 716-286-6662.

Traveler advisory for Niagara Scenic Parkway

Lane closures scheduled on Niagara Scenic Parkway in City of Niagara Falls

New York State Department of Transportation is advising motorists that lane closures are scheduled on the Niagara Scenic Parkway (State Route 957A) in the City of Niagara Falls to facilitate milling and paving.

There will be right and left lane closures both eastbound and westbound on weekdays beginning Monday, April 3, through June, from Interstate 190 to the intersection of John B. Daly Boulevard and Buffalo Avenue. No weekend lane closures are planned.

NYSDOT stated, "Motor-

ists are urged to slow down and drive responsibly in work zones. Fines are doubled for speeding in a work zone. Convictions of two or more speeding violations in a work zone could result in the suspension of an individual's driver license."

For up-to-date travel information, call 511, visit www.511NY.org or download the free 511NY mobile app. Follow New York State DOT on Twitter @NYS DOT and @NYS DOT Buffalo. Find NYS DOT on Facebook at [facebook.com/NYS DOT](https://www.facebook.com/NYS DOT).

VFW increases scholarship funds

Veterans of Foreign Wars Downriver Post 7487 announced the following:

Applications for the Bruce Sutherland and Larry Stephens Memorial Scholarship fund for 2023 have been increased to \$1,500.

Each year, VFW Downriver Post 7487 has given a schol-

arship to deserving students from the Lewiston-Porter and Niagara Wheatfield school districts. This year, we have added a scholarship for trade school students. Applicants must be enrolled in a college, university or an accredited trade school, and will begin this fall.

An application form, along with the essay subject, may be obtained from the Lewiston-Porter or the Niagara Wheatfield high school counseling centers. Applications and essays will be due no later than May 8.

For more information, contact Jack Waugaman at jgwaugaman3d@gmail.com.

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Health Risks of Poor Sitting Posture

Slouching at your desk all day long has a number of bad effects such as: increased risk of neck and back problems, high blood pressure, increased fatigue, wear and tear on joints from improperly aligned bones and joints, increased stress on spinal ligaments, increased muscle strain and pain. Your spine can become fixed in this abnormal position causing constriction of blood vessels and nerves as well as problems with muscles, discs, and joints; consequently resulting in headaches, organ troubles and breathing difficulties.

Proper sitting involves: keeping both feet flat on the floor (or using a foot rest), aligning your back with the back of the chair, not slouching or leaning forward, keeping your shoulders straight and adjusting the chair so your knees are even or slightly higher than your hips and your arms are at 75-90 degree angle at the elbows.

To help overcome bad posture, make stretching part of your daily routine, especially at your desk. An exercise ball can be used instead of a chair to strengthen the muscles of good sitting posture. With so many adults and children sitting at home at a computer or doing desk work, it is vital to see a chiropractor regularly to realign the spine for improved nerve supply, reducing muscle spasm and improving body function, posture, respiration and reducing stress.

Rose Chiropractic, P.C. is a natural health practice that gets bodies in good working order through Nutrition Response TestingSM and chiropractic, located at 435 Ridge St., Lewiston. New patients are welcome. Call (716)754-9039.

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 June 26-29 Frankenmuth/Mackinac
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 July 25 Grand River Lunch Cruise
 Sept 11-15 Montreal/Quebec
 Sept 20 Sprague's/Seneca Alleg. Casino w/\$25 Casino bonus
 Sept 27 Lucy Tour - Jamestown, NY
 Oct 3-9 Smoky Mts./Nashville/Grand Ole Opry
 Oct 15-19 Vermont/N. Hamp/Maine - Portland Lighthouse
 Oct 25 Sprague's/Seneca Alleg. Casino w/\$25 Casino bonus
 Nov 14-16 Fest of Lights-Oglebay Park - Wheeling, WV
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