

Lewiston Town Board presented tentative 2021 budget

Town Board sets Oct. 15 meeting to review numbers

BY TERRY DUFFY
Editor-in-Chief

Budget season is now underway in the Town of Lewiston. At Monday's work session, the Town Board was presented a tentative 2021 budget of \$18,367,654 by Donna Garfinkel, town clerk/tax collector.

She revealed the 2021 salary schedule for elected town officials. This includes: town supervisor, \$43,583, with a salary waiver of \$8,583 as Supervisor Steve Broderick currently only accepts a salary of \$35,000. Other salaries include: highway superintendent, \$72,989; town clerk, \$63,606; town justices (two), \$28,495 each; and town council members (four), at \$14,410 each.

As issued, the 2021 tentative budget finds a schedule of appropriations spending totals, estimated revenues, an appropriated fund balance and the amount to be raised by taxes. By the numbers, appropriations listed and the tax impact to property owners from the tentative budget includes: A, Lewiston general, \$2,923,271 and \$731,922; B, Lewiston general/outside village, \$3,156,360 and

\$0; DB, highway drainage-town outside village, \$3,124,146 and \$296,450; and SS1 Water Pollution Control Center, \$2,290,166 and \$0.

Subtotals show \$11,493,943 in appropriations and \$1,028,372 to be raised by taxes.

In special districts, the numbers presented and the tax impact finds: S10 French Landing drainage, \$5,350 and \$5,350; SF fire protection, \$1,498,790 and \$1,496,283; SL Lewiston Heights gas, \$11,000 and \$11,000; SR refuse - Lewiston O/S village, \$340,514 and \$340,314; SS2 Lewiston MSIA, \$1,835,773 and \$220,471; SS3 Lewiston South Sewer IA, \$305,520 and \$209,365; and SW1 Lewiston water improvement, \$2,876,764 and \$1,126,915.

As stated, the tentative plan received for Town Board review finds a slight decrease of \$115,717 in the town's total appropriations spending from its adopted 2020 plan of \$18,483,371. It also projects slight drop in the property tax hit - namely a proposed \$4,438,070 to be raised by taxes, a decline of \$9,545 from last year.

"Taxes have declined," said Jacqueline Agnello, town budget/finance director. "(It) depends on

where you live." She said that, for property owners, the actual amount could vary due to the town's different sewer districts and their reflective costs.

She provided a few examples for potential tax impacts for the owner of a property assessed at \$200,000 in the town. For a property in the SS2 sewer district, taxes could see a decline of \$10.64; for a village property, a potential drop of \$3.20; and for a North Hewitt Drive property, a potential decline of \$7.06.

Agnello said that, over past weeks, the town has been working diligently to address costs and budget planning for 2021 in the face of continuing local and state financial constraints brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have met with department heads throughout the process," she said.

One page in the budget summary titled "Department Requests" revealed slightly higher numbers than those found in the tentative budget, showing changes from the various input the town has been considering thus far.

Agnello said Lewiston - like a number of municipalities - has

been hit hard by the decline in sales taxes and state aid reductions, and the town has been forced to adjust. Agnello pointed to impacts to the town's B fund and highway accounts.

"Highway has felt the impact of reduced state aid," Agnello said. She revealed the potential for a 20% decrease in funding. "We're finding different ways on how it's affecting us."

She said discussions continue with the various town departments. Supervisor Steve Broderick and the Town Board would review the numbers at a meeting, to take place from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 15, in the board meeting room at Town Hall. That session is open to the public, but with COVID-19 safety guidelines in place.

Agnello said the Town Board has yet to meet with Lewiston's various community organizations on their funding requests, and that the board would hold a public hearing next month on the preliminary budget following its day-long meeting with departments. That board session is scheduled for 6 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 5, at

Town Hall.

The budget faces adoption by the board for submission to the state by Nov. 20. Agnello said the budget covers all current town needs, and that major issues such as the town waterline project and pending town union contracts are not included. She stressed the town supervisor and council members remain very much cognizant of the town's spending abilities and the financial limitations of the community.

"We have worked very hard on this budget; all town spending has been examined and cuts made," Agnello said.

She closed by pointing out the town recently received "great news" from Moody's Investors Service with an updated rating of Aa3 from its earlier A1 listing.

"It's great news - quite an increase. This will assist us when the town goes to BAN for the water project," Agnello said.

The 51-page town budget summary PDF is available for review online at the Town of Lewiston website, at www.townoflewiston.us.

Wheatfield discusses Halloween plans

BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO
Interim Tribune Editor

At Monday's Town Board meeting, the Town of Wheatfield announced that this year's Halloween trick-or-treat hours will be from 4-8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 31. The town recommends all participants follow state and CDC guidelines and take caution in all Halloween-associated activities.

The list of CDC of guidelines is available on its website www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html#halloween. Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced last week that the state would be releasing its Halloween guidelines based on discussions with the state Department of Health soon.

Per the resolution, the town adds, "No one in the town is required to participate. Residents who choose not to participate should turn off their porch light during trick-or-treat hours."

Speaking of Halloween, Parks Department Director Mike Renali said his department is looking to host a small, social-distance-friendly Halloween event from 3-4 p.m. at Fairmount Park on Oct. 24. Details are still being worked out, but Renali said, they're looking to "keep it small; keep it simple."

"We're just going to try to keep it where families can come to the park, really just with their loved ones," he said. "The kids can dress up (and) it can be where there's limited contact between staff, volunteers, residents; and they just come and hang out in the park for an hour and do their own thing. We're gonna set up a display where they can kind of take pictures ... and check out our Halloween decorations."

Renali added that, for safety reasons, there won't be any handouts this year.

Supervisor Don MacSwan noted there were some wrinkles to be ironed out in terms of safety, but said he favored the idea.

"I think it's a great idea to get families involved; and if anybody has been over to the town's walking path, it's an area where they can walk and still keep social justice and, hopefully, enjoy their Halloween."

Renali said the department is looking to have its Youth Center reopened by late October/early November. Currently the department is studying other municipali-

ties reopening plans for guidance.

Elsewhere at the meeting: •Highway Superintendent Paul Siegmann said leaf pickup is set to begin in about two weeks. He reminded residents not to put tree trimmings out after that period.

"Remind your neighbors when you see them chopping down trees... we're gonna start with one leaf sucker and then, once the leaves start really falling, we've got to put two of them on the road. And with the amount of guys I have, I can't keep both leaf pickers going, the chipper, and still try to keep another crew going for pipe installation and other

road work. So, just a reminder. Tell your neighbors," Siegmann said.

•The board approved a motion allowing the town to enter into an agreement with DC Family Tree Service for the cutting down of approximately 27 ash trees on town property behind Winbert Drive. Said agreement is in the amount of \$4,500 and was reportedly the lowest quote received to date from responding tree services.

Siegmann noted there is a possibility some of the costs could be offset if the company is able to sell the trees.

The next board meeting is

scheduled for 7 p.m. Monday, Oct. 5. The tentative budget work session will be held at 6 p.m. Wednesday Oct. 14.

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As October is National Chiropractic Health Month, I am offering my readership the opportunity to come in for a complementary initial exam and health consultation to find out if we can help you or someone you know. Call 754-9039 for an appointment. Rose Chiropractic, P.C. is located at 435 Ridge St., Lewiston.