

**PUBLIC HEARING  
TENTATIVE BUDGET FY/2012  
CONTINUED  
MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2011**

The Public Hearing on the Tentative Budget for fiscal year 2012 was continued on Monday, April 11, 2011 at 6:30 PM in the Boardroom of the Village Hall, 7 Stage Road, Monroe, NY. Emergency exits were announced.

**Present:** Mayor Purcell; Trustees Gormley, Chan, Wright and Eppinger  
**Also present:** Treasurer Murray, DPW Supt. Smith, Police Chief Giudice, Justice Strauss, Justice Lezak, Attorney Bonacic and Village Clerk Carey

There were 26 people present. The Public Hearing was continued from Tuesday, April 5, 2011. Mayor Purcell announced that public comment would be limited to 5 minutes. After closing the Public Hearing, the Board will accept any additional comment, in writing within 7 days or until April 18<sup>th</sup>. Mayor Purcell then answered some of the questions raised at the Public Hearing last Tuesday.

A question was raised concerning money received in the Highway Contract (\$26,500). It didn't show up because the books were not closed for the month of March. It won't be reflected in the 2012 budget because it is not a guaranteed revenue item. We don't know if we are going to get the contract with the County for plowing again in FY/2012.

The 3.4% Budget was based on review of the budgets supplied by department heads for the 2010-2011 budget.

Question was raised on Fund Balance. For the record, for the Fund Balance at the end of fiscal year 2010, former Mayor Karl was a member of the Board at the time of adoption. At the end of 2010, there was \$698,000 in unreserved Fund Balance. When we deducted at the start of the 2011 year, \$180,000, the Unreserved Fund Balance was \$509,000. At the end of this fiscal year the projected Fund Balance will be approximately \$578,000. Once the end of year audit is completed, you will have an exact number in late June.

Regarding questions about short falls in Safety Inspection Fees. They will not drop. Our Village Engineer, Lanc & Tully PC reduced their rate to the 2007 rates as of last year.

Regarding the question of the part-time Assistant Building Inspector, there is plenty of work to keep him on.

The increase in the water allocation is due to extra labor and will continue to be put in with the village staff working with the Water Department. The Board felt this was warranted for the increase of labor and is a perfectly legal allocation from the Water Fund.

The Board reviewed the budget again at a workshop held on 4/7. There were some reductions made following public concern at the Public Hearing. The budget was reduced by another \$24,000.

The Public Hearing was opened to the floor.

Richard Goldstein, 154 Rye Hill Road, commented on the fact the budget has been revised and not available until this evening. Thus he was not properly prepared. He felt the Public Hearing should remain open for at least another week in fairness to the public. Tonight is the first opportunity the public has had to see it. Mr. Goldstein said he was representing two hats tonight, one as a 7-year appointee on the Monroe Joint Park Recreation Commission, the other as a taxpayer. The statement being made is not that of the Park Board but rather his own personal feelings. The Park Commission Budget runs on a calendar year and in prior

years, has been dictated by the Town. The Town finalized the budget and forwarded it to the Village to advise them of their fair share. When the Park Budget was presented this year, it had a slight increase. However, through the diligence of the Park Board, they managed to deliver a budget that decreased spending by 6% or \$37,126 over-all. Mr. Goldstein said he was proud of what the Park Board was able to achieve in difficult times and further no sacrifices have been made in the park. When the Park Commission presented their Budget to the Town, proud of their accomplishment, it became clear the Village Board was not satisfied. They wanted more. Following that meeting, Trustee Eppinger was present at the next Park Commission Meeting. Frank was looking for 10% and recommended 10% from the Park and made it clear he would be seeking the same for all departments in March when the Village Budget was due. He repeated himself numerous times. Mr. Goldstein's review of the Village's budget does not reflect this reduction. In fact, he said it is quite the contrary. Mr. Goldstein selected a few budget lines for the Board to consider reducing. The Contingency line in two years has not been used. Why the 53% increase? The Park Commission had \$10,000 in their Contingency line and were asked to reduce it to \$8,000. Snow Removal, having experience in Snow Removal for 30 years and this being one of the worst winters in history, last year we had more snow in inches and had \$77,611 in expenses. This year you have \$92,636 in expenses and you had more to do. You may not be doing that next year and therefore the line should be less. Why are you budgeting \$140,000? Do you think it will be worse next year? The Monroe Joint Fire District, after approximately 30 years the fire district has been formed and the purpose was to make a fair and equitable tax rate for all. The budget process was difficult. It included 4 municipalities and 3 Fire Departments. What was expected was that both the Town and Villages would no longer have the fire burden in their budgets thereby reducing the tax levy. Accounting 101, when you experience expenses in prior years, you need to show it. Furthermore, you must show that line item in 2012 with a zero. Currently, there is \$201,000 floating in the tentative budget. Plus you need to add the LOSAP expense and workers compensation. If you add all three together, it is in excess of \$300,000 that is still floating in this budget. You only budgeted for seven months, you want to show this. The expenses have been removed but the tax levy never changed. The only revenue removed was the Town of Monroe contribution. Mr. Goldstein closed by saying he's upset that he personally has done his share as an appointed official in doing what's best to save the taxpayer money. But, the elected people here he feels have not. You failed to represent a complete budget for the public to review. You have failed to represent what the true increase is to the taxpayer and you owe the taxpayers of Monroe an explanation.

Peter Martin, 20 Amy Todt Drive, commented this was his first time seeing the budget. On the revenue side for Sales Tax it looks like a solid and safe amount. The second mortgage tax check you'll be receiving will be about the same as the first check about \$58,000. The number you show is also a safe number. Mr. Martin agreed with Rich Goldstein having labored through 20 years working on the Fire District, it pains him to see there isn't more money coming out this year. After careful review of the budget, Mr. Martin said he may have written comment. Regarding the Fire District, who on the Board was following up with the Town to see that everything was closed out. Mayor Purcell said all we have to take care of is the LOSAP and it has been taken care of.

Michelle Hieronymi, Winchester Drive, agreed with Mr. Goldstein, she asked for the revised budget earlier today and was told it would be available at the meeting tonight. This is unacceptable. There was no time to review it. The front page of the handout shows you reduced the budget a half of a percent. That is unacceptable. You all said unanimously last summer there would be a zero percent increase. Mayor Purcell replied he never said it would be a zero, he might have said zero based. It's in the minutes on line, Mrs. Hieronymi said. She wanted to know what happened to the 6-figure surplus. Mayor Purcell said he already gave the numbers. At the end of FY/2010 there was \$689,000 in Fund Balance that included the \$349,000 that everyone quoted last week. When you take the \$180,000 we use every year as start money for the budget, it brings it down to \$509,000 in the unreserved fund balance. The projected 2011 fund balance is \$578,000, Mayor Purcell sat Friday with our auditor going over the budget page by page to make sure the numbers are correct. The state recommends

we carry 5-10 percent in fund balance. You have 4-5 pieces of equipment you are selling at auction, why? If it's good equipment, why are you selling it? Supt. Smith answered he has an equipment replacement program. The equipment is 1989 and 1991. Repairs are needed. Small trucks are replaced at 10 years and big trucks at 15 years. The big truck being replaced is 20 years old. The loader is operating and in good shape for a 1989, but at some point in time it's going to have a major breakdown and that will be \$10,000-\$12,000 repair when it's only worth \$18,000. That's the amount we plan to get auctioning it. We try to stay on pace. The money we receive from selling goes back into the Equipment Reserve line. Trustee Chan commented that 3 years ago due to the salt in the highway yard the axle fell off the bed, the truck flipped over and we lost a \$13,000 spreader. It was a 1985 vehicle. The insurance company paid for the spreader but our insurance went up. Thank God it happened in the yard and not on the street. We once tried a used transmission on a Police vehicle. That didn't work out. We funded the bill for the used transmission. We wasted the money.

Mrs. Hieronymi questioned the \$34,000 for a new Police vehicle. Mayor Purcell said the vehicle will replace one that is breaking down and costing us a lot of money in repairs. Warranties come with new vehicles and that saves money.

Mrs. Hieronymi continued. Supt. Smith's salary looks like he received a pay raise of \$13,524. The salary went from \$26,000 to \$40,000. That was an agreement made two years ago, Mayor Purcell said. He got that much of a raise, Mrs. Hieronymi asked?

Two thirds of the budget went to the Police Department. That is on the backs of the taxpayers of the Village of Monroe. How many cops are there? Mayor Purcell responded, eighteen. Trustee Eppinger interjected, he did some research in defense of the Police Department. Currently, we are in contract negotiations. The previous administration saw fit to sign a contract for a 4 year period (2007-2011), 15.125% raises. That's why it's high, you had 3-years at 3.875% for a total of 11.625%. If you look at the current budget this is our allocation because we are under contract with negotiations coming up. Some of the costs are based on our prior administration. How long has the village had 18 officers, Mrs. Hieronymi asked. Mayor Purcell said 5 years. Last year when asked why taxes were going up, she was told the Village was hiring another officer. Mayor Purcell said to replace the one who retired. We haven't exceeded the number of officers in place. The Police Department is a big burden, Mrs. Hieronymi said.

John Karl, 21 Pearsall Drive, was disappointed that the Public Hearing was once again starting at 6:30 PM. There are people who might have attended tonight but can't because they are coming home from work. Regarding the former administration, Mr. Karl said he was one of five board members. Everything that comes before the Board is voted on by all five board members. The minutes on-line for August 17, 2010, Trustee Eppinger said that "based upon this procedure we should strive for necessary budget and tax breaks. If not there is no reason we shouldn't have a zero percent tax increase. We should all strive for minus ten across the board for next year's budget. If not, we should go for zero. This is based on observation on signing all payments, vouchers, and the current economy." Keep that in mind, Mr. Karl said. Regarding some of the numbers brought up on Tuesday. Mr. Karl said first and for most when asked what the 3.4% pay increase was based on, the answer was not what he was looking for. As Mayor in 2010, the position term ended March 31<sup>st</sup>. Therefore, Mr. Karl said, he did not close out the 2010 fiscal year. There was a \$566,790 difference on the actual and what was budgeted in 2010. Your reason for that was you took the fire out of the budget and the \$566,790 will be much less. That was the answer Mr. Karl was looking for. As no one has had time to look at the revised budget, Mr. Karl hoped the Board would keep the budget hearing open. The Parks Contractual line last week had \$20,000. You have bumped up to \$30,000. A \$10,000 increase there. Mr. Karl is disappointed with the salary increases. Some long term employees in this Village are not projected to get any pay raise. That is disheartening. You have a judge looking for a \$2,000 salary increase. Judge Strauss said he is not looking for anything. Mayor Purcell said that was addressed last week. Mr. Karl

referred to Home Rule Statute 24 that says a Local Law is subject to a Permissive Referendum if increases of an elected officers salary is given during his/her term of office. "If taxpayers don't like what's going on, or they feel they are being short changed, you have the option, this is the year, a petition can be filed for a referendum. The petition must be signed by a number equal to 20% of the electors of the village as shown on the register of election of the previous General Election. Your previous General Election was this past March. With 50 people voting you only need 13 signatures. A referendum can be forced to put the judges salary increase on the ballot for a vote.

Bill Scolza, 5 Holland Road, commented on the transfer of Highway Equipment Reserve, Village Hall Renovation Reserve, Employee Benefits, Parkland Reserve – are you going to be using those funds in this year's budget or are you going to be transferring that into the following year's budget? If transferring, you'll need to re-budget for next year. The Contingency line is excessive. You have a bond for tax certiorari, \$29,000. You have more than enough in Contingency to take it out of there. You didn't need to add another 1% into Contingency and then take another bond for \$30,000 for another five years. Mr. Scolza would like a return of the fire budget's \$300,000. That's 1% for each \$40,000. That's 7% right there. In negotiation of any of the contracts coming up, this Board should review over-time management. The Board has a right to oversee the department heads. Manage them if it gets to the point by minimizing budget transfers and keep people in-line for particular things. If you have to hold-off and keep things in-line for the taxpayers that should be done in their interest on these contracts.

Michelle Hieronymi commented if the judge didn't ask for the \$2,000 increase, he should give it back.

Anthony Ruscito, 22 Letts Circle, commented on the issue of the judge's salary, whether it's right or wrong, that is not the issue. How do we make the public aware of it. Do we advertise it in the Times Herald Record for a period of time. How can people really see it and be aware of it. Mayor Purcell said the Village does what the law requires. Mr. Ruscito asked, is it true union workers get a raise and non-contract do not. Mayor Purcell said the Police contract is an existing contract that has been in place. We negotiated the IBEW contract for highway and water employees with zero the first year and they are not getting retro pay. Village employees have protection through the Village Handbook and for those positions that are competitive, Civil Service. Mr. Ruscito said there shouldn't be favoritism, let it be across the Board.

Trustee Eppinger commented the previous highway contract was spread over 3-1/2 years. That contract was three times as much. The highway worked with us and are to be commended. If we look back in budget 2006-2007 there was a 9.27% increase. In 2008-2009 there was a 9.914% increase and in 2010-2011 a 4.58% increase. With the economy going down, there has been a drop. You do the best you can based upon the economic situation. From Trustee Eppinger's perspective, based upon history, the percentage is good. As far as truck replacement for the highway, we are responsible for the safety of the village's employees. You can't have trucks falling apart, they jeopardize safety.

Mr. Goldstein commented that while Trustee Eppinger has apologized to him regarding zero abased budget, he needs to go to the next Joint Park Commission meeting, state his case and apologize to the whole board. The Park Commission deserves an apology.

John Karl asked the Mayor to explain what he said to Mrs. Hieronymi regarding the police officer and rate. Mayor Purcell said we just replaced the officer. Mr. Karl said wasn't that officer's salary and retirement already in the budget? When someone retires that salary still stays in the budget. When he leaves, a new officer comes in. While you're going into contract negotiations, dispatching is becoming very burdensome. We don't need it here anymore. Mayor Purcell said in response, that is your opinion. Mr. Karl said the reason for his opinion is 12 years ago the Village of Monroe Police Department took on 4 emergency entities to

dispatch, the Village of Harriman PD, Monroe EMS, the Monroe Fire Dept. and the Monroe PD. Currently, they are dispatching their own agency. 2006 – 9.9% increase in taxes. For the record when he took over as Mayor, there was a tentative budget inherited with a 26-1/2% increase in taxes proposed. There were 5 additional Police Officers proposed. That was cut-out. Two members of that Board were left. Three members lost that election. That budget was pared down dramatically. Here we are five years later, we never hired those five officers.

Bill Scolza said on the negotiation of contracts going forward on the state retirement and police retirement, every year you're adding \$100,000+ to retirement. Mayor Purcell said if anyone wants to make a real change in the pension system contact your State Assembly and Senate members. We are bound by state constitution and have no control over cost. We had a 75% increase this year toward the pensions. United Health Care is an additional \$267,000. Now we are only off \$30,000 from the deduction of the fire budget. There are certain things that are completely out of the Boards control when it comes to budget. Another example, is 207 c, we have an officer who has been on disability for over 3-years. The state did not recognize the disability; we are still paying the full salary. We can't hire anyone and have to pay over-time to cover that shift. We already know there will be a 42% increase in pension next year. The year after is projected to be 47%.

Mr. Goldstein said this budget is different from previous budgets in that you are taking a large amount off with Fire Protection. That is the major concern here. The 3.4% increase you had proposed, that is not really what it is. Mr. Goldstein doesn't feel the LOSAP has been closed out for 2010. That is not a true representation that it is not a true representation to the taxpayer of what the increase is because of this variable of \$300,000. He feels there should be a zero budget.

Peter Martin commented zero percent increase budgets don't make sense in this world. Cost of living is going up, costs are going up, health care, revenues are all going up, the job we have is to try to get increases down as much as possible and as palatable as possible. The contingency talked about and some of the other transfers, you are real close to being able to find another \$100,000. If you took out another \$100,000 you would be close to having the \$300,000. Mayor Purcell responded we have negotiations coming up. We don't know if that will involve arbitration. We have to be prepared. We feel the Police Department will work with us and come in with a good contract to make it fiscally feasible for the village residents. Tax certiorari is another matter, we are looking at 6 cases or half a million dollars. We have to be prepared.

Mr. Scolza commented with your contract negotiations consider part-time employees to help manage the cost, manage the over-time, supplement when people are out with part-time employee coverage. In that way, the taxpayer isn't burdened. If you know you're going to have a 42% and another 47% increase on top of it, if you know what your future expenses are evaluate it. Hiring part time employees could help you manage the budget.

John Karl said in defense of the Village Board, arbitration use to always favor the unions, that is starting to change and favor the municipality. Arbitration is a big expense. Again, a savings is to start with the midnight dispatching. Have the 9-1-1 center do it. It is a \$100,000 savings.

Mayor Purcell defended Judge Strauss. This judge has brought in a tremendous amount of revenue the last four years and has never asked for a raise. Mayor Purcell apologized if he made a mistake with the law. He had no knowledge and it was not his intent to circumvent the law to give the man a raise. He has brought in grants that have enabled improvements to the building. That equates to a savings to the taxpayer. If anyone in the public wants to do a public referendum and cite that man's salary, shame on you! This man has done nothing but positive things for this village. Mayor Purcell thanked the Board and Treasurer for the time and effort put into the budget. The Mayor said he has 3 years experience doing budget, he's learned something new every year. We do the best for our village with the resources at hand.

**We have services that need to be provided and that people expect. We have a quality of life we all like. The Mayor thanked everyone present for coming out and voicing their opinion. The public needs to participate in the system to gain an understanding of exactly what goes on, so you get the facts. We are always available at Board Meetings to answer public comment. The Clerk's office is there to answer questions or take messages for me. We are still working to get the budget down. We have time restraints and therefore cannot keep the public hearing open. Any comment should be submitted in writing within 7 days.**

**On a motion by Trustee Wright seconded by Trustee Eppinger, the Public Hearing was closed at 7:35 PM.**

**Ayes: Trustees Gormley, Wright and Eppinger**

**Nays: Trustee Chan**

**On a motion by Trustee Gormley seconded by Trustee Chan and carried, it was:**

**RESOLVED, the Board will accept written public comment for 7 days or until April 18, 2011.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Virginia Carey**

**Village Clerk**