

At 7:00 p.m. Supervisor Lester called to order a public hearing located at the Town Hall, 18 State Street, Brockport, New York on October 24, 2006. The purpose of the public hearing was to hear all persons interested in the budget, in favor of or against the Preliminary Budget for 2007, or any item therein to include the compensation to be paid to all elected Town Officials, pursuant to the requirements of Section 108 of the Town Law.

Town Board Members present were Supervisor Buddy Lester, Councilperson Rob Carges, Councilperson Patricia Connors, Councilperson Tom Ferris, and Councilperson Danielle Windus-Cook. Also present were Finance Director Leisa Strabel, Highway Superintendent Fred Perrine, Town Attorney Jim Bell, Receiver of Taxes Kathy Roberts, and Town Clerk Karen Sweeting.

Visitors present were Town of Sweden residents Dorothy Mae Kanous, Donald LaRock Sr., Mary Ellen Mulligan, Dora and Andrew Jones, Martin and Evelyn Spink, Bud and Stella Detar, Malcolm Calman, Christine Snyder, James Murphy, Jim Hamlin, Tim Bates, Jack Milner, Lauren and Lois McCracken, Alex Hinkley, Rebecca Donohue, Linda and Bob Canham, Elaine Weber, Dave Fleisher, and Stan Fleisher; Spencerport residents Dale and June Smith, and Beverly and Don Lewis; Hamlin residents Irma Badge, Terry Thran, and Sandra Walton; Clarkson residents Dolores Zielonko, Frances Piccirillo, and Arlene Ward; Holley residents Joyce Henion and Geneva DeMascio; Wal-Mart representative Drew Coleman; students Nicole Weber, Michelle Roberts and Seth Robishaw; and reporters Robbi Hess from the Suburban News and Mike Costanza from the Brockport Post. Others were present but did not sign in.

Supervisor Lester asked Town Clerk Karen Sweeting to read the legal notice published in the Town newspapers. Notice was read.

Supervisor Lester started by stating that the Board has good news. Sweden residents will have the same level of services in 2007 with a decrease in the Town tax rate due to a gain in assessed valuation. The gain is attributable to new construction and a recent assessment update concentrating on commercial properties.

Mr. Lester explained that every property is included in the town's total assessment, but when the tax rate is computed all the tax-exempt properties must be removed from the equation – schools, churches, hospitals, government building, etc. Nearly half of all properties in Sweden are tax-exempt. A chart was shown with comparisons and 47.3% of Sweden property is tax exempt. Comparatively, from highest to lowest, Gates at 16.9%, Chili at 13.4%, Ogden at 11.3%, and Clarkson at 4.1%. Mr. Lester added that out of 932 towns in New York State, only 16 have a higher percent of exempt properties than Sweden. The towns with lower percentage of exempt properties can spread the costs of services over a larger base than Sweden.

The Town Board has scrutinized every part of the budget to save taxpayers' money. Mr. Lester stated that every department has been asked to deliver the best service at the lowest possible cost. The employee health plan has been changed saving the Town approximately \$30,000. The Town has proposed contracting with a caterer, ABVI, to provide lunches for the Senior Nutrition Program that will save the Town approximately \$30,000-\$35,000 in 2007. Upgrades to the Town's computer network will take place before the end of 2006 resulting in lower computer service bills in 2007 and an on-site computer position has been eliminated.

Supervisor Lester focused on the change to the Senior Center's Nutrition Program. The Senior Center will continue to provide the same nutritious lunches as it already serves. The only

part that will change is how the meals are delivered. Currently the meals are cooked on site. All other area centers have their meals delivered, which makes more economical sense. The County Office of the Aging sets the menu. ABVI can provide the same nutritional meal for \$4 that currently costs the Town of Sweden \$7 to prepare. We are losing \$3 per meal. For the year 2005 those meals cost the Sweden taxpayer \$50,000. The Town Board has reviewed the numbers from the Nutrition Program at the center and found that people who don't live in Sweden consume 75% of all meals prepared at the center. Mr. Lester stated that he has sent requests to our neighboring towns to contribute toward the cost of providing lunches to their seniors. Those surrounding municipalities will not contribute.

Mr. Lester stated that it is the Board's duty to deliver all services in the most cost effective way possible. Contracting with ABVI will allow the town to continue to provide lunches to all seniors and allow the Board to honor their duty with the taxpayers. Mr. Lester added that he understands change is difficult, but this change will allow the kitchen to be open for other uses – baking groups, cooking classes, special events. Mr. Lester stated that the Town of Sweden has the best senior center in Monroe County and seniors will continue to have access to healthy noon-time meals.

Town spending will increase approximately 1% in 2007. The tax rate will decrease by \$.08 per thousand in the Town outside the Village (from \$4.51 to \$4.43) and by \$.02 per thousand in the Village (from \$2.35 to \$2.33). Mr. Lester stated that the Board has been working on the budget for four months and are pleased to present a budget that preserves all the same services at their current level at a reduced tax rate.

Supervisor Lester asked if anyone had any comments.

Resident Bob Canham stated that he was asked to be the spokesman for the Sweden Senior Center. He stated that the Senior Center provides quality, fresh made meals as well as recreation, exercise, education, travel and social opportunities to seniors in the area. Mr. Canham added that many of the centers members are active in many community-enhancing activities such as making mittens, hats and quilts, active in the Food Shelf program and work with troubled youth counselors. Mr. Canham is proposing that members of the senior center and members of the Board partner to brainstorm. He stated that there are several money-raising proposals that can be looked at if the reduction to the nutrition program is removed. Mr. Canham suggested monthly reviews of costs versus budget. Mr. Canham requested that the Board leave the nutrition program as is and review the progress of the center's proposed money-raising events throughout the next year. He added that the quality of the food is a great attraction to the Senior Center. Mr. Canham didn't feel that the quality of food prepared by ABVI was as good.

Supervisor Lester asked Mr. Canham which centers he had visited to taste the food delivered by ABVI. Mr. Canham stated he had not visited any sites to taste the food.

Supervisor Lester reiterated that the Board is not cutting services. The only thing changing is the delivery of the noon time lunch. Mr. Lester mentioned that the cost of the nutrition program has been a concern beginning with his predecessor. The program funding does not keep up with the cost of inflation.

Mr. Canham asked why the members of the Senior Center did not get notification of this concern earlier. Councilperson Ferris answered that the Board has been reviewing this issue since last year. The Senior Center director has been involved since last year. The Board has met with the Senior Center staff and they provided the numbers to the Board for review. Mr. Canham asked

if the decision could be postponed until next year. Councilperson Ferris answered that the Town Board has a responsibility to the whole, not just a portion of taxpayers. It is unfair to burden Sweden taxpayers when only 25% of our residents take advantage of the program. Contracting with ABVI will allow the nutrition program to continue for all seniors. If concerns regarding the quality come up, then it is the responsibility of the director of our center to make sure that ABVI is providing quality meals; it will be the director's challenge. Mr. Ferris stated that Supervisor Lester has talked with centers in other towns such as Henrietta and they reported no complaints.

Supervisor Lester added that the members of the center were welcome to continue with their fund-raising efforts. They need to show that the funds will be consistent enough to support an on-site chef. The Board would consider revisiting the issue once a good reserve and consistent funds are available.

Resident Marilyn Lafferty stated she has been involved with the Senior Center for over one year. She mentioned that she does not want to see the kitchen positions cut; no one likes to see anyone lose their job. Ms. Lafferty pays town taxes and does not want to see money used outside of Sweden. She suggested that the seniors give the change a try, keep an open mind and keep track of the things that are not right. Ms. Lafferty added that it makes sense to look into long range funding.

Resident Stan Fleischer stated he was curious about who has the power to make choices at the center and also why taxes are paid on the center. Mr. Fleischer shared the deeds for the Senior Center property.

Resident Dora Jones asked why ABVI can put out meals for \$4.00 and it costs our center \$7.00. Councilperson Ferris answered that it is an "economy of scales". The more you serve the less cost per meal. Ms. Jones felt the town was blaming the non-residents. Mr. Ferris stated that contracting with ABVI would allow the center to continue to welcome outside residents while honoring the Board's responsibility to the Sweden taxpayer. The change will only affect lunchtime meals; it will not affect any special programming. Ms. Jones felt that the seniors should have a chance to vote on this change.

Joyce Henion from Orleans County considers attending the Sweden Senior Center a privilege. Supervisor Lester stated that he is proud of the center; it is one of the nicest in the state. The Board wants the non-residents to continue to come to the center and contracting with ABVI will allow that to happen. The Town of Sweden does more for seniors than all other area towns. Councilperson Carges added that an addition was done recently and last year the parking lot was enlarged. Many improvements to the center have been done over the past several years.

June Smith from Spencerport stated she drives the van to deliver food to Ogden. She stated that any food that has to be delivered to another location loses its quality; vegetables become soggy and the meat is tough. Ms. Smith stated that our center has an excellent nutrition program and she feels that if it is changed, the center will lose people.

Resident Linda Canham inquired about the mechanics of the change; will a site manager have to be hired. Councilperson Ferris answered that the town will pay a server for the meals.

Dale Smith from Spencerport, also a van driver, asked what portion of County money goes to the nutrition program. Councilperson Ferris answered that \$4.00 is covered and the Town is responsible for the remaining \$3.00 per meal.

Resident Marilyn Lafferty asked why Ogden, Riga, and Parma get their meals from Sweden instead of ABVI. Supervisor Lester answered that meals were provided to the towns many years ago. They met their expenses in the beginning, but now due to inflation, it does not.

Resident Tim Bates stated that he ran against members of the board last year, he attends all board meetings, and has questioned every line of past budgets. Mr. Bates stated that he knew the board has agonized over this decision. The Board has made several other changes already saving taxpayers' money; employee health care benefits changed recently saving several thousand dollars. Mr. Bates stated that this change is only affecting the delivery of the meals at the center. Mr. Bates feels that the decision is logical in today's market. He agrees that the Town of Sweden has the nicest center. Mr. Bates stated that this change was an unfortunate, but smart move proving that the Town Board is watching out for our taxes.

Linda Hale from Hamlin stated she was a resident of Sweden from 1980-2003. She stated the saddest part of this decision is she feels that the non-residents who are members of the Senior Center are being blamed. Supervisor Lester stated that to place blame is not the Board's intention. Non-residents are welcome and add to the social factor at the center. The Town of Perinton only serves meals to their residents. Mr. Lester stated that the Board is accountable to the taxpayers; the Board has to answer to its residents.

Councilperson Windus-Cook stated that the cook has done a good job for the center with preparation of the meals from a required County menu. This was a decision that the Board really didn't want to do and reiterated that the Board does not blame the non-residents. This concern has been ongoing for some time and the Board realized that something different had to be done.

Resident Dorothy Kanous asked if other activities were to take place in the kitchen how were those activities going to be possible without a cook/kitchen staff. Councilperson Windus-Cook answered that the recreation director can develop any program. Many activities require outside persons. Resident Marilyn Lafferty added that several elements would have to be considered for special event meals such as legal logistics. Councilperson Ferris stated that since the Senior Center has a 501-C3 organization they could set aside moneys for special luncheons. It is all about using your resources.

Supervisor Lester stated that the Board cannot please all those present for the hearing. He invited anyone to go outside of the Town of Sweden to compare what other towns provide for their residents. Mr. Lester stated that the Town Board has a fiduciary duty to the taxpayer.

Resident Bob Canham stated concerns regarding input from the members of the center regarding the nutrition program; members of the center do not have an opportunity to be involved in the issue. Supervisor Lester stated that the Board has had several department head meetings. Councilperson Ferris stated that anyone is welcome to attend the Town Board meetings where business of the town is discussed. The Board feels that this is the right decision based upon their responsibility to the taxpayer.

Supervisor Lester asked if anyone had any further comments. No one spoke. The public hearing was closed at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen M. Sweeting
Town Clerk