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Village of Lewiston to vote on budget

BY JOSHUA MALONI
GM/Managing Editor

The Village of Lewiston Board of Trustees will present the projected fiscal year 2021-22 budget at a 6 p.m. meeting Monday, April 19, inside the Red Brick Municipal Building.

Following a pair of meetings, and discussions with department heads, Treasurer Stephanie Myers has prepared an estimated budget of $4,088,804, which is $169,548 more than the current cycle. That includes $3,279,154 in general fund expenses (an increase of $142,518), $356,000 in water fees (down $21,087), and $453,650 for sewer maintenance (up $48,117). Revenues are projected to be $3,576,179, an increase of $75,500.

The tax rate is set at $7.76. A 9.5-cent tax increase, per $100,000 of assessed valuation, will net an additional $15,018. The sewer rate is intended to remain the same, at $4.79 per 100 cubic feet of usage. The water rate would increase 5 cents – to $3.75 – for an additional $4,600 to the village.

Trustees anticipate needing $512,625 in appropriated fund balance – up from the projected $448,138 for 2020-21 – to balance the spreadsheet. The village has a little more than $2 million in the bank.

Of course, the municipality has rarely had to pull from its coffers in recent years. Accountant Pat Brown of Brown & Company recently compiled a list of the past nine budgets. It was thought a total of $1,065,615 would be needed to balance the budgets – ranging from $24,068 in 2012 to last year's $448,138. In actuality, the village had a surplus of $1,397,863 in that period – a favorable variance of $2,463,478.

The village is currently $281,183 on the plus side for the fiscal year ending May 31. If that stands, it will be an almost $730,000 positive variance.

Mayor Anne Welch said, "After budget work sessions and reviewing the proposed 2021-22 budget, the Village Board was able to reduce some of the budget lines. We still have to use some of the fund balance and increase taxes by .095105, which meets the NYS guidelines to stay under the tax cap. Property taxes will increase approximately 10 cents per thousand, which doesn't even cover the cost-of-living increases. Utilities, health care and insurance rates have increased. Due to COVID, our state aid and sales tax revenue has been reduced along with other lost revenue sources.

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IN THE NEWS

Catholic Health expands hospital visitation

Based on new guidelines from the New York State Department of Health, non-COVID-19 patients in Catholic Health hospitals are now allowed up to two visitors at a time. In addition, maternity patients will be allowed two support persons for the duration of their hospital stay and, in certain outpatient clinic settings, where space permits, patients may be accompanied by a support person for their appointments.

Hospital visitors, limited to those age 18 or older, are required to undergo a health screening, complete an online registration process, and follow all safety guidelines – including wearing a mask at all times and washing or sanitizing their hands before and after each visit. Individuals who report significant COVID-19 exposure or symptoms in the past 10 days, or have a temperature of 100.0° F or higher, will not be permitted to visit.

Hospital visiting hours are from 2-6 p.m. daily at Kenmore Mercy Hospital, Mercy Hospital of Buffalo, Mount St. Mary's Hospital, and Sisters of Charity Hospital Main Street and St. Joseph campuses. In-person visitation is not permitted in restricted COVID-19 units, except for patients receiving end-of-life care.

Due to enhanced screening and registration processes, hospital visitors may experience short delays. To expedite the registration process, visitors may complete an online form prior to their visit. A complete list of visitor guidelines and the online visitor form are available at chsbuffalo.org/visitors.

New York Power Authority fishing piers open for season

New York Power Authority's fishing facilities, including the fishing pier at the base of the NYPA Robert Moses Niagara Hydroelectric Power Plant, were set to open for the season on Thursday.

The fish-cleaning station and handicap-access elevator at the dam site also is expected to be available. The stairway providing access to shoreline fishing will remain closed for safety reasons because of shoreline erosion.

The fishing piers near the Upper Mountain Fire Co. at the Lewiston Reservoir and at the water intakes along the upper Niagara River were also slated to open for the season April 1. These sites will be open daily from dawn to dusk and are admission-free.

Users should maintain adequate social distancing and follow New York state recommendations regarding use of masks.

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 286-6662 or visit www.nypa.gov.

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