

Village of Lewiston begins budget preparation

Municipality gets favorable review for 2019-20 operations

BY JOSHUA MALONI

GM/Managing Editor

Village of Lewiston Treasurer Stephanie Myers presented the Board of Trustees with a preliminary \$4.07 million budget for fiscal year 2021-22, which begins June 1. The proposed property tax rate is \$7.76 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, which would be a dime increase over the current rate.

Even with a 10-cent bump – which is permitted under the state tax cap – a projected \$500,000 would be taken from the village’s bank account to balance the budget.

Rates for water (\$3.70 per 100 cubic feet of usage) and sewer (\$4.79) are shown as remaining the same.

Elected leaders will meet three times over the next month to determine final figures, which will presumably change like in past years’ budget talks. As such, board members didn’t comment on this first-glance document at Monday’s monthly session.

Trustees will gather in the mayor’s office at 5 p.m. Mondays, March 22 and 29, and Thursday, April 15. Residents are welcome to attend, but must wear a mask and social distance.

Finances in Good Shape

Accountant Pat Brown of Brown & Company recently presented the Board of Trustees with analysis of the municipality’s audit dated May 31, 2020. For the 2019-20 fiscal year, elected leaders expected to need \$285,260 in appropriated fund balance to even out the \$3,718,986 million budget. As it turned out, expenses were \$404,677 lower than projected. Revenue also was higher than anticipated – by \$17,550 – leading to a positive variance of \$422,227. Overall, revenues exceeded costs by \$136,967.

Total fund balance as of May 31, 2020 – including general, water and sewer funds – was \$2,042,905, an increase of \$136,968 from the 2018-19 fiscal year. Unrestricted fund balance was \$1,331,999.

“The village is in good, stable position,” Brown said. “All funds have surplus fund balances” and there is a “very solid fund reserve.”

Trustees have projected a need for appropriated fund balance in each of the past five budget cycles, but, “You can see, from 2016 right up to 2020, we’ve operated at favorable operating surpluses,” Brown said. “So, what that means, each of those years we’ve operated as a surplus. Your revenues exceeded budget.

“And, really, you’ve held tax increases to a minimum. Some of the years none. You’ve been operating within budget – better than budget.

“But, like I said before, that can change dramatically. We may see that with this (uncertain economic time). Keep in mind, this is 5-31-2020, before the effects of the pandemic. So, we’re going to see how that’s shaping out for this fiscal year. Anyways, you have good fund balances to handle that.”

Looking ahead, a Deputy Mayor or Vic Eydt-led subcommittee is researching ways to shore up the firefighting water supply for Center Street, and looking at water infrastructure improvements on Ninth Street.

“We’re looking at trying to ... bring another line across the parkway, off of 104; because right now it stops right at 104 at the bridge,” Eydt said Monday. “We only have one line that’s coming across from Seneca Street, underneath the parkway. If we can bring that other line in, it will eventually boost the (water) pressure in the village. It will give us a second source of water, and then everybody should be in a lot better shape.”

An idea suggested with Brown was using a bond anticipation note.

Brown also recommended beefing up the water account, which has operated at a loss for five consecutive fiscal years.

Last July – in the wake of a Center Street fire at the Brickyard Brewing Company – trustees adopted local law No. 2-2020, section 20-102 (water, sewers, sewage disposal of the village code). A surcharge of \$10 per billing cycle was added for capital water/sewer improvements. That billing went into effect Oct. 1.

“Water system ended up having a shortage, so we had to reimplement that surcharge to cover that,” Brown said. “But also, more importantly going forward, I just told you the water fund itself, the operating fund, does not have adequate fund balance to address what I’ve heard ... (is) the major water line replacement and things of that nature. ...



While fighting a fire at the Brickyard Brewing Company last May, Lewiston firefighters determined water pressure on Center Street could be improved. Trustees are now looking into ways to finance a capital improvement project to bolster the infrastructure needed for such safety measures. (File photo by Mark Williams Jr.)

“That surcharge goes directly into this fund. It gets collected as part of the water and sewer (fee). But, quarterly, it will get transferred from the water and sewer bank account into (a) capital project account. So, we’re going to start building fund balance. ...

“Any expenses that come out of there, they will not be for operations. They’ll be for, basically, starting to accumulate money for this water line.”

With such a project forecast to cost around \$1 million, Brown said now is a good time to take out a BAN.

“What I had suggested is a bond anticipation note be issued. Interest rates on borrowing right now are at record lows,” he said.

“It’s like below 1%,” Mayor Anne Welch said. “We are (also) looking into infrastructure grants.”

The Free Dictionary defines a BAN as, “A short-term municipal security that has its principal repaid from the proceeds of a long-term municipal bond issue that is sold at a later date. Essentially,

BANs represent debt that is used until long-term funding is available.”

Terms could be a year, 10 years, or even longer.

Brown said, “You really have very little debt outstanding, and those bonds that are outstanding are going to be paid off (in the near future). ...

“It’s not unusual at all to finance projects like this – I mean, you have to. Especially with the rates the way they are.”

“It’s foolish not to now,” Welch said.

In Other News

•Residents who have yet to work with the Department of Public Works in upgrading their water meters will be fined \$50 per billing cycle, starting with their April 1 statement.

There’s only a couple dozen residences left to be tended to, and Myers said her office is working with individuals who have pandemic-related issues that delayed the changeover process.

•The board will look into adding restricted parking signs on Center Street – though Welch said the Lewiston Police Department considers time limits to be unenforceable.

Trustee Dan Gibson has asked for designated parking signage in front of the Plant Shack at Center and South Fourth streets, noting

people are leaving their cars outside of the new store and heading into restaurants or going down to the waterfront for a prolonged period of time.

He cited signage at The Silo that reserves spaces for patrons. “What’s fair is fair,” he said.

Welch said that is a different situation, as the village owns the property and leases it to restaurant management.

“There was problem because so many people were at the park, and the fishermen and the boating and everything, that they were using up all the spaces in front of The Silo,” Welch said. “So, the board (years ago) decided to give them so many spaces in front, so that people could actually get to The Silo.”

“During a certain time frame,” Eydt said.

Trustee Claudia Marasco said, “Maybe we have to relook at the promises that were given then, because Lewiston is much larger than when they gave that.”

Deal Realty owner Tom Deal said village merchants need dedicated spaces. He pointed out a couple of businesses that already have restricted parking signs.

“How can it be OK for one business and not anyone else?” he asked.

Of course, when indoor dining was closed last year, restaurants began cordoning off areas for curbside orders.



Meet the Easter Bunny

The Village of Lewiston Recreation Department is offering a photo opportunity with the Easter Bunny in Marilyn Toohey Park, outside the Red Brick Municipal Building, at 145 N. Fourth St. From noon until 2 p.m. Saturday, April 3, children can have their photo taken and get a take-home bunny-themed craft and treats.

The event is free, but requires pre-registration at <https://tinyurl.com/LewistonBunny> by April 2. Families are asked to bring their own camera to take pictures.

In case of weather, the event will move inside the gymnasium.

All attendees must wear a mask and social distance, as required by state law.

Get Connected & visit wnypapers.com
 Local News, Stories, Classifieds, Coupons,
 SERVICE DIRECTORY Plus Exclusive Photos, Videos & MORE

<p>DICAMILLO BAKERY</p> <p>All Stores Open 7 Days</p>		<p>NIAGARA FALLS 811 Linwood Avenue Daily 7am-7pm • 282-2341</p> <p>1700 Pine Avenue Daily 9am-5pm • 284-8131</p> <p>7927 Niagara Falls Blvd. Daily 7am-7pm • 236-0111</p>	<p>LEWISTON 535 Center Street Daily 8am-7pm • 754-2218</p> <p>WILLIAMSVILLE 5329 Main Street Daily 7am-7pm • 635-6504</p>	<p>ALL PRICES VALID UNTIL MARCH 31, 2021</p> <p>Irish Breads</p> <p>SAVE 50¢</p> <p>Irish Soda Sweet or Soda Irish Sweet</p> <p>Coupons may not be combined with any other offer or discount. Expires March 31, 2021.</p>
<p>St. Josephs Breads</p> <p>Large \$1.00 Off</p> <p>Small 25¢ Off</p> <p>While Supplies Last</p> <p>Coupons may not be combined with any other offer or discount. Expires March 31, 2021.</p>	<p>Hot Cross Buns Lots of 6</p> <p>SAVE \$1.00 Limit 4</p> <p>Coupons may not be combined with any other offer or discount. Expires March 31, 2021.</p>	<p>Pies</p> <p>\$1.50 off</p> <p>• Mince • Creme • Fruit</p> <p>Coupons may not be combined with any other offer or discount. Expires March 31, 2021.</p>	<p>Donuts</p> <p>\$1.50 off A Dozen</p> <p>Old fashioned, large donuts, made fresh daily</p> <p>Coupons may not be combined with any other offer or discount. Expires March 31, 2021.</p>	<p>Dinner Rolls</p> <p>50¢ off Dozen Price</p> <p>Assorted, poppy seed, plain, sesame seed Limit 4 Dozen</p> <p>Coupons may not be combined with any other offer or discount. Expires March 31, 2021.</p>

Real Help For Your Health

Presented by
Dr. Glenda R. Rose
Chiropractor

The Eating of the Greens

March is National Nutrition month, think green – veggies that is. Vegetables form the foundation for healthy nutrition. By vegetable is meant: fresh green, red, white, yellow, or orange vegetables, the kind that are grown in the garden, which are often called “pot-herbs”, not grains, fruit, nuts or tubers, such as the potato.

The main focus of meal planning should be the vegetable rather than the meat or grain. Vegetables are so important and very often neglected, being eaten only occasionally. Yet, the most necessary mineral and vitamins cannot be stored to any extent in the body and therefore, must be replenished daily. So every day should include raw foods, especially the green and yellow vegetables. Even taking a synthetic vitamin pill will not provide all the factors contained in whole food. However, our whole food supplements can and do; visit www.standardprocess.com.

Another wonderful way to enhance daily nutrition at any age is juicing fresh organic vegetables, known to improve vitality and support healing. Juice provides raw vegetables for people who do not like salads or cannot chew them well. Even individuals with sensitive stomachs that raw foods upset or those who cannot digest and assimilate salads properly can usually handle a carrot-based juice.

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 754-9039.