

Avon Township Board of Trustees
Budget Hearing Minutes
433 E. Washington Street, Round Lake Park, IL 60073
March 23, 2015
7:00 pm

1. Call meeting to order 7:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call

Trustee DeLaMar – present
Trustee deGroh – present

Trustee McNeill – present
Supervisor Rusch – present

Trustee Larson – present

Also in attendance Clerk Kearby, Highway Commissioner Kula and Attorney Dietz

4. Public Participation

Georganne Duberstein compared to previous budget, why did health insurance go from \$46,700 went up to \$72,000, dental up \$1,000, Life Insurance went up \$11,000 and the employment over doubled. Trustee Larson noted that because it is a Quadrennial year requires additional labor to perform those tasks.

Douglas Raul Williams asked if these are permanent or just for the cycle. Trustee Larson explained that it is for this year and will be examined for the next year.

Georganne Duberstein asked if the last time this happened did you go back and look at the personnel costs. Trustee Larson said yes, Dave McArtin did but there were flexible staffing and the insurances were not consistent compared to this year. But it is relatively close, maybe less than 4 years ago. She made a statement that you should reduce Ditton's salary for the time he closed the office and pay for these increases.

Douglas Williams noted that it was hypocritical for him to sue when he approved the original cuts under Yingling. He also cautioned to not reward bad behavior by Assessor Ditton. He cut the budget and now he is suing you.

George Duberstein asked what happened to all the employees. Attorney Dietz noted the office was closed because there was no longer enough money to pay the employees. He asked if there were a set number of employees for that office. It was noted that the Assessor requests that every year. Mr. Duberstein said so there are not a set number of employees to be staffed. Mrs. Duberstein asked if we had zero based budgeting and did the Assessor follow those guidelines. Supervisor Rusch answered yes and that for the most part Assessor Ditton did comply.

Al Horcher asked I am curious what we have to do to get a new employee in there. What can I do to rally the troops to get the public and further this along? Attorney Dietz noted that it is not a part of the agenda and there are ways according to the law. He cannot give you legal advice because he represents the Board.

Barbara Jersey in regards to the Assessor's absence and the office being closed, did the Township do any kind of due diligence on the impact on the community and how the public was

served. Attorney Dietz noted that the Township did their due diligence to make sure the public was represented when the office was closed. We are still working on knowing what still needs to be done. These questions might be better asked to the Assessor. The Assessor did come and address the Board to determine what has been done. How is the Board going to assure that this never happens again? Attorney Dietz noted that we only have control over the budget, not the Assessor. We only have a certain amount in the budget. There is give and take everywhere. Mrs. Duberstein asked how much money the Township has in reserve. Trustee Larson reported, as of yearend, reserve is \$ 745,843.00. We do have a little room to adjust for the Quadrennial I request.

Mr. Williams asked if you had to take \$150,000 last year out of the reserves. Trustee Larson stated \$167,000.

Mrs. Duberstein asked if you will need \$167,000 every year. Trustee Larson said it was not the Board's intent. Bear in mind there are capital projects \$45,000 that is included in the \$70,000 over spends for the next budget year.

Ms. Jersey asked if the public would have an opportunity to address the Assessor prior to the allocation of his funding. Supervisor Rusch stated that the budget will be approved after the budget hearing.

Mr. Williams asked how we can approve a budget when the Assessor is not present to answer our questions. Attorney Meister stated that he was one of Assessor Ditton's attorneys and that Assessor Ditton is at a mandatory training and would be available by phone to answer questions.

Assessor Ditton was called on the phone by Supervisor Rusch. Mr. Ditton was reluctant to speak to answer the public questions so Supervisor Rusch passed the phone to Assessor Ditton's lawyer. It was asked what the Lawyers hourly rate was by Mrs. Duberstein. Supervisor Rusch noted we could not answer the question because of litigation...

Lisa Vargas asked, has the Board agreed to the Assessor's budget. We will go through each of the line items and if there are questions, we will answer each of them. We will vote on the budget at the meeting following the Budget Hearing.

Mr. Meister returned putting Mr. Ditton on the phone to answer questions by the public.

Mr. Williams can you explain why you are asking for more money than the Board allocated for you. Assessor Ditton noted the office needs four people to operate efficiently and he has modified the budget to include one or two part time people. Mr. Williams noted when he approved the budget cuts under Mr. Yingling that brought us to this deficit spending and the 22% deficit. Ditton noted that under P-Tell he would have voted to levy \$890,000 and lower the Supervisor's budget. He did lower the levy but he would have then raised the levy under P-tell. Are we going to be in a position that every time they reduce the budget you will then sue the Township and make them pay legal fees? Are you going to keep suing the Township every time you don't like the budget? He is working with the Board and they understand how much it takes to run an efficient office and I trust this will not happen in the future.

Barbara Jersey noted that past history is an indication of future performance. So are you going to close the office and disengage from the community when you disagree from the budget that is approved? I do not foresee the need to reduce the hours and I think the board will supply sufficient funding.

Mr. Williams asked why you would need the same amount of staff after the Quadrennial year. Why would we want to allocate the same amount of staff? Assessor Ditton noted that it is part of negotiations between myself and the Board.

Mrs. Duberstein reiterated, but the board has the final say in the budget. The statute says I have to have enough money to run the office. I think I will have an opportunity to discuss with the Board and I will have enough money to run the office.

Attorney Dietz noted that there would be an opportunity to ask questions during the discussion on each budget. Supervisor Rusch directed Trustee Larson to start the presentation on the budget.

Trustee Larson presented a PowerPoint that presented an over view and gave a bit of history on the process...He noted that we may have to look at a levy increase in the future.

Noted where the revenue for Road and Bridge. Questions were asked regarding the definition and what the funds were used for. Commissioner Kula explained each of the Road and Bridge Fund and their subsequent uses.

Further explanation was given on the amounts allocated for General Assistance fund.

Supervisor Rush explained what the GA funds were used for and how they were given to citizens that qualify for those funds. The direction and support for these funds are regulated by statute. There was a discussion on how small the proportion is for GA compared to the Town Fund. Supervisor Rusch explained how the salaries are set and that they could not be adjusted for the four-year term. We set the salaries for the elected officials six months prior to the election for the subsequent four years. Questions were asked on why the Assessor's salaries were so much more than the other salaries. Clerk Kearby explained that he has more employees.

Trustee Larson explained comparisons of employees with other Townships.

Another question was the Fuel Tax and Commissioner Kula explained that the County holds the money and the Commissioner on a need basis can then request them. Question was asked about where the revenues come from. It was explained by Commissioner Kula and Supervisor Rusch that the bulk comes from property tax, but there are grants we apply for and MFT and Replacement tax, which is kind of like a sales tax and are allocated by the State. Therefore, Revenues increased a little bit.

Trustee Larson gave a more detailed account of the Town fund explain building maintenance and capital improvements. These are not inclusive of the Assessor's office. Also it was explained that the salaries allocation was not just for employees, but also included other professional services. It was asked how many employees the Assessor had and how many he wanted. Trustee DeLaMar noted the equivalent to four full time staff. A question was asked the difference in GA and EA, Supervisor explained the difference of General Service and Emergency Service. She noted the process.

It was asked what types of grants were given. Supervisor Rusch noted several examples. She offered to give Mrs. Duberstein a complete list, but she said she was satisfied with the

examples. She also explained the application process and that they needed to address the impact of the request for Avon Township residents. There may be differences from year to year but it is usually balance out in another line item. So we have stayed pretty consistent. It was asked how many employees are paid out of the TOWN and GA. 1 and a third. The number allocated includes benefits, insurance and pension costs. Some Townships go to part time employees to eliminate some of the benefit costs. Some of those districts may not have the poverty issues we have in Avon and lowering elected officer salaries may be compensated with more hired staff.

Commissioner Kula noted that there was a serious need for a new truck to replace aging equipment. His budget was cut by 50% but he is still providing the services under a very limited budget. He noted that they are deficit spending and have cut every line item to the bone. For example the roof had to be replaced. They have been patching since 1979. Bob explained individual line item for Road and Bridge and Hard Road accounts within his budget such as the salt budget. Also noted was that the Highway Department handles the winter plowing with temporary personnel. He also explained how switching to a Van from the bus cost the same per month but the van's maintenance and repair is covered by PACE not the Township. It is a great savings to the district. Trustee deGroh noted that the Township tracks all the calls and transportation is the major portion of the phone calls.

Supervisor Rusch asked if there were any further questions.

Patrick Duby asked about the times the Assessor's office was closed, the assessor was doing the appeals. He was told the Assessor has nothing to do with the appeals. He was told that the Board of Appeals rules without the work of the Assessor. Supervisor Rusch says there is a process and he should contact the Assessor himself.

Ms. Jersey asked about the model of using part time staff that the Commissioner uses in the Assessor's office. Attorney Dietz noted that the Township Board allocates his funds and he is the only one that can determine how those funds are used. I don't like the way he is spending. Can we present that to him? Trustee DeLaMar stated that he was asked to consider using part time staff and possibly interns and asked to look at alternative staffing models. Trustee deGroh also noted the Township Board asked to have his employees work 40 hours a week and that most salary employees work more than 40 hours. She also asked how much was reduced. Supervisor Rusch noted that we removed one entire person from the GA and the Grants as well. Each line item was also slashed to bare necessities. Supervisor Rusch added that you can get the number of abandoned homes in the area.

Mr. DeNomie asked about the training the Assessor needed to take the job. He asked if the training is enough to do his job. Attorney Dietz said the Trustees can't ask that question and noted that the public voted him in to do the job of Assessor.

Mr. Duberstein asked who paid for the training for Mr. Ditton to get his CIAO. Supervisor Rusch said he paid for the training to get his CIAO.

Copies of the revised budget were passed out to the public.

5. Discussion and Action on 2015-2016 Road and Bridge Budget

Avon Township is subject to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Individuals with disabilities who plan to attend this meeting and who require certain accommodations in order to allow them to observe and/or participate in this meeting, or who have questions regarding the accessibility of the meeting of facilities, are asked to call the Township office prior to the meeting.