

SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE VILLAGE OF HIGHLAND FALLS

March 25, 2009

A special meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Highland Falls was held in Village Hall, 303 Main Street, Highland Falls, New York on March 25, 2009.

The Meeting was called to order by Mayor D'Onofrio at 6:00P.M.

Members present were:

Mayor Joseph E. D'Onofrio
Trustee Harold Brown
Trustee June L. Gunza

Member Absent was:

Trustee Michael Bosch
Trustee Robert Mellon

Also present were:

Village Clerk, Regina M. Taylor
Village Treasurer, Ralph J. Walters
Village Street Superintendent, Gary Boyce
Police Chief, Peter Miller
Trustee Elect-Joseph McCormick; Trustee Elect-James DiSalvo
DPW employees- Michael Jones & David Hurst
News of the Highlands Editor Emeritus, Fred Brennan(6:15pm)

Discussion was held on how to reduce the tentative budget from approximately 17% to approximately 10% or less. The Treasurer reminded the Board that the Tentative Budget that was filed with the Village Clerk on March 20th has an increase of 17.13% and this is the budget that must be read at the Public Hearing scheduled for April 6th. He mentioned that the Board could make a statement to the effect that the Board is still looking for ways to reduce the tax increase and that they have until April 30th to adopt a final budget.

The Mayor asked the Board for permission to sit down with the Union Representatives to discuss the serious situation the Village is in and to tell them the Board is considering layoffs. The Board was in favor of the Mayor speaking to the representatives.

Mr. DiSalvo suggested the possibility of overtime being budgeted for as a fixed amount and that is all the Department Head has to work with. They must schedule accordingly. Chief Miller mentioned that he budgets his overtime that way. The Treasurer said he budgets overtime for the DPW, Water & Sewer Departments and he basically looks at prior year history to arrive at an estimate. He also said the same goes for the salary lines. The Chief figures for his departments and Ralph figures everyone else, based on settled union contracts.

The Board asked Chief Miller that if overtime shifts need to be filled, are part time officers or dispatchers called in first. The Chief said they are, however, they are not always available. He is against part time hiring for this reason. A person will tell you they will be available and then once hired, they are not always available. Mr. McCormick said he believes that the Village is in a position now where they must consider hiring more part time to have a better chance of one being available. The Chief stated he would not be in favor of doing this.

The Mayor told the Chief that the Board is looking for \$70,000 out of the Police budget. The Chief responded this would impact on the service that is currently provided. Mr. McCormick replied that mutual aid from the Town could help. They are only going to be located a mile away. He told the Chief he would have to make it work. Mr. McCormick mentioned that the Chief might have to be on the street more. The Chief highly objected to this statement and told the Board that he does spend time on the streets.

The Mayor said maybe we need to look at cutting the DARE program. He is a proponent of DARE and believes it does a lot of good, however, when the Village has to start talking about layoffs and people losing their jobs, its time to look everywhere we can to find savings. The Chief responded that the DARE program is reimbursed partly by Orange County, however, he is aware that funding at the County level is also being cut and there is no guarantee for funds in the future years.

The Chief said he is working on a Cops CHRP grant that would fund police positions for three years due to lay offs and then the municipality would have to pick up the salaries after that.

Chief Miller reminded the Board that the service they provide is three shifts for twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. Any layoffs or reduction in force would be certain to impact services provided. The Chief asked if there was any more talk from the Town regarding communications. The Mayor responded that right now the Village has a letter from the Town indicating they are pulling out of the communications agreement as of June 1, 2009.

Discussion continued on how there might be possible savings in the Police budget. Mr. McCormick asked if a phone could ring in the Police car. The Chief reminded Mr. McCormick that while on patrol, there could be times when the car is in a dead zone and the call could be lost. Mr. Walters, Treasurer, asked if maybe the midnight dispatching shift could be handled through 911. He remarked that elimination of a dispatcher's salary in that shift could possible save \$38,000 + benefits because no back fill would be needed. He did stress that the people would need to be educated about the change. The Chief responded he still can't understand how the Town thinks that 911 will work. He said the one of the towers they plan to rely on does not have electricity, and there is no guarantee from West Point that they will be able to use it.

Chief Miller said approximately \$50,000 could be saved by elimination of a dispatching shift and he would look into the possibility of using 911 during that shift only. He will check into what savings the elimination of the DARE program would be and he would recalculate the salaries in the Police line at a 2% instead of the 3% currently figured in, reminding the Board that negotiations should be starting soon.

Mr. Gary Boyce, Street Superintendent, asked the Board not do anything with the dispatcher's position until the Town proves their new system will work. Let the Town work without the Village providing service and see if everything works smoothly. The may have to come back to the Village while the kinks are worked out. Mr. Boyce also said that cutting manpower in his department will impact the services currently provided. He mentioned that leaf & yard waste collection is very costly. It takes time and cost money to dispose of.

The Treasurer followed up by saying he doesn't see where anymore can be taken out of this budget. It's a bare bones budget now.

A motion was made by Trustee Brown to enter executive session to discuss the possible layoffs of particular people and the possible abolishment of a particular position within the DPW.

The motion was seconded by Trustee Gunza and unanimously carried. The Board entered executive session at 7:25pm.

Trustee Gunza motioned to come out of executive session at 8:45pm. The motion was seconded by Trustee Brown and unanimously carried.

The regular meeting reconvened at 8:45pm. A motion was made by Trustee Brown to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Trustee Gunza and unanimously carried.

The meeting closed at 8:45 P.M.

Regina M. Taylor, Village Clerk