

Village of Fleischmanns  
Workshop Meeting  
March 22, 2012

The Village of Fleischmanns Board of Trustees held their Workshop Meeting on Monday, March 22, 2012 at the Skene Memorial Library at 4:00 p.m. Present were: Deputy Mayor Todd Pascarella, Harriet L. Grossman, Fred Woller and Benjamin Fenton. The purpose of the workshop was to go over the budget for 2012-2013.

The following comments pertaining to the 2012-2013 Tentative Village Budget from Russell Schebesta, the Village's Part-Time Account Clerk, to the Village Board were read as follows:

Please find the DRAFT Tentative Budget for 2012/2013 that I have prepared for your review and consideration. Please get back to me with any questions and/or changes.

Here are some of the highlights/changes I have included in the new budget per review of your current activity, prior year's revenues and expenditures, and info provided by you.

NOTE: I had a budget meeting with Benjamin Fenton and Harriet L. Grossman this past Friday, March 9<sup>th</sup> to go over the budget and gather information to help prepare this first draft.

1. The bottom line on taxes per this DRAFT is an increase of \$10,366.00. This would exceed the State imposed 2% tax cap by roughly \$5,000.00. In other words, you would need to decrease the amount to be raised by taxes by \$5,000.00 to comply with the cap.
2. Revenues and Expenditures in the General and Water Fund have been adjusted to reflect more on current trends in your activity.
3. A pay raise of 2% for the 3 full-time employees has been included. This has increased appropriations in the General Fund by about \$1,500.00.
4. The Water Fund budget is basically the same as 2011/12. Some items have been adjusted, but the bottom line is about the same.
5. The Sewer Fund budget is based on estimated provided by Delaware Operations, as were the 2011/12 budget figures.

Discussion was held by the Board as to the reduced tax base & water utility billing losses due to the damage caused by Hurricane Irene & Tropical Storm Lee. Approximately five buildings were destroyed. Discussion was held with Russell Schebesta, Benjamin Fenton and Harriet L. Grossman as to health insurance & the health savings accounts. It was noted that the health insurance premium went up 16.6%. Decidedly the Village will leave line 9060.8 the same for right now.

Deputy Mayor Todd Pascarella advised that if the Village Board does not change anything as quoted in the tentative Village budget, we have a \$10,366.00 increase which puts us over the cap. I think the goal should be 0% increase so lets look to find expenditures that we can eliminate.

The NYS Retirement line was discussed, along with general Village Insurance, flood insurance premiums, salary and contractual expenses, gifts and donations, chips revenue, FEMA reimbursements, Fire Department budget, expenses for snow removal, keeping track of man hours for snow removal, street maintenance, reallocations, budget allocations from the Village & Towns for the Library,

Peg Ellsworth said she was hearing of DOT multi-modem program coming out attached to Downtown Revitalization which is your Main Street Program on the Southern Tier, so that could be an answer to problems with the roads, if an application is developed and funded. If nothing else it would take care of Main Street which is critical.

The following letter received from Village Trustee Benjamin Fenton dated March 22, 2012 addressed to the Village Board and the people of Fleischmanns was read aloud:

I would first like to congratulate Fred Woller and Harriet Grossman on their re-election. The people of the Village have spoken. Now is not the time for petty arguing and dredging up the past. We as a Board must look forward to the future of the Village, especially in these critical times.

In a letter written by Harriet L. Grossman, I have been accused of participating in secret meetings to further ‘private interests rather than the public benefit.’ It has been suggested that “other secret meetings have been held” and that “we can all make our own conjectures as to what was discussed.” It has been written by Fred Woller that I participated in “too many secret meetings” with “too many secret agendas.” Fred Woller and Harriet Grossman “are not willing to stand for more of the same. (They) stand for government that is truly representative of the interests of the people of Fleischmanns. Fred Woller has further written, “Unfortunately we (Woller and Grossman) have been kept in the dark about issues that the other Board Members have tried to sneak through.”

These statements have forced me to reflect on my performance as a board Member. I would like to take this opportunity to bring Fred, Harriet, and the people of Fleischmanns up to speed on the projects I have been involved in. I no longer wish to be accused of holding secret meetings with secret agendas.

Below is a list of projects that I have been working on. I **will not** be following up on any of these, lest I be accused of future wrong doing.

**Fire Department-** I have attended the last few fire department monthly meetings. In January I went through all of the fire department vouchers, as well as their budget and put together a chart of their YTD expenses, which I distributed to the Village Board. I met with Karl Von Hassel on March 14. Based on my analysis, I’m projecting the fire department will be over budget by at least \$1,000.00 by the end of their fiscal year, even with the \$12,000+ they just received in insurance money (see attached). I am concerned because the insurance money will need to go to pay “regular” expenses. The truck with the most damage has not been repaired. Todd Wickham thinks some insurance money went directly to the repair shop. Please follow up with Todd on the status of the truck. If the repairs have not been made, the expense will still have to be spent (over \$7,000), which means they will be that much over budget in their next fiscal year. I continue to remind our attorney to start the process of having the fire department become its’ own entity. The fire department is doing the same thing. Alan White of Halcott and Tom Grocholl of Middletown will also need to be looped into that conversation. Since Fred was a member of the Fleischmanns Fire Dept., maybe this would be a good project to spearhead.

**Shared Services –** Over 20% of our annual village budget is for employee salaries and benefits. Even more money is spent by the crew on materials & etc. I know that we have a “loose” shared services agreement with Middletown. I also believe that Todd Pascarella has started conversations with Middletown about the future of shared services. I personally have spoken to Peg Ellsworth of the Mark Project about shared services grants available through the state. I am very concerned about the rising costs of benefits for the Village employees. For example, the health insurance costs for the Village employees are going up 16.6% in the coming fiscal year. The question in my mind is can we tap into the intimate knowledge that Mike and Corky have of the Village while using state funds to seg-way them into a more efficient highway department encompassed in Middletown? How much money in labor and materials can we save? This begs the question of disincorporation, but that’s a different conversation. I encourage you to follow up with Peg in regards to the grant, as well as work with Todd, Marge Miller and John Byrock in regards to shared services.

**Code Enforcement Contracts-** I have recently reviewed the building inspector/CEO contract between Middletown and Fleischmanns, as well as Pat Davis’ annual report. We pay Middletown \$20,000 a year for his services. Middletown collected \$4,051 in fees in Fleischmanns in 2011. I think its time to revisit that contract. I would suggest contacting Marge Miller and starting a conversation. Maybe money can be saved by getting the contract price reduced or at least a portion of the fees collected back in Village hands.

**Theater-** Someone needs to follow up with the Mark Project as to whether they would like to lease the building. It is my understanding that they would put every dollar received in rents back into the building, as well as start a dialogue with the community as to the future of the building. They would also attempt to solicit grants to stabilize the building and possibly rehab the apartments. All of this needs to be followed up on. In my opinion, the building eventually needs to be sold. I am giving you a copy of the NYCOM'S handbook on Municipal Real Estate Transactions. Please review. Also, it is my opinion that the Village should reach out to Elizabeth Morell and work out a payment plan for the back rent owed. Please contact our attorney in regards to this.

**Pump Station-** I had initially spoken to Rob Allison of Catskill surveying a year ago about leasing the space. By the end of his lease, we will have collected \$3,600.00 in rent for the building. According to Lou Dibble of Delaware Engineering, the only additional cost incurred by the Village by having the tenant in the building was an increase in the annual electric bill by \$255.18 (see attached). This lease is up May 15, 2012. I personally believe the Village needs to continue to rent the building to Catskill Surveying, as we need the money. It's also nice to have a business at the end of town. Someone needs to follow up with the tenant.

**Bio-Fuel Facility-** As you're aware, the Catskill Forest Association received a grant to study the feasibility of a bio-fuel facility in the Village to heat homes and business. With the rising cost of heating fuel oil, this could truly be a golden opportunity for the Village. This was put on the back burner after the flood. I had scheduled a meeting with Jim Waters of the CFA for April 3 at 10:00 a.m. to try and kick-start this process. I suggest someone contact him and follow up on this, as I will be bowing out.

**Streams-**In my opinion, a constant line of communication needs to be continued between the Village and Delaware County Soil and Water in regards to the NCRS EWP program. The clock starts ticking on March 31, 2012, and the work needs to be complete in 220 days. The big job that will have to be done by someone in the Village is getting permission from property owners for the work to be done. John Fairbairn was working on forms. Continued communication and coordination with Soil and Water is of the utmost importance to the long term viability of the Village. Also, someone needs to follow up with Delaware County Planning in regards to the potential buy-out properties in the Village and how that will fit in with the long term flood plans.

**Pool-** Prior to the flood we had talked about coming up with a job description for the pool manager and other pool employees, as well as other rules/guidelines for the pool. I had emailed Harriet on July 2, 2011 a general job description that I found online from another municipal pool (see attached). I realize there have been past personality conflicts between Harriet and pool manager Linda Pesa. However, as the past pool manager, believe her input is important in crafting the policies and procedures for the pool. As the only recreational facility that will be open this summer, this is of utmost importance.

**Park-** Once the FEMA Project worksheets are completed and we know how much money we are receiving from the park, the entire project needs to be implemented. This will be a monumental task. As you are aware, the park plan in the comprehensive plan calls for upgrades to the playground, moving the basketball courts, upgrading the concession stand, and creating a new parking area. Furthermore, all of the other aspects of the park will need to be repaired and addressed. There will need to be a coordinator for this project, marrying the money from FEMA, the playground donations received, the \$125,000 park grant, as well as other monies to create a budget and plan, and then implementing the whole thing.

**Assessments-** Some years ago the Village chose to remain an assessing entity. This year we had several people grieve their assessment, especially based on the flood. We need to decide if we want to lower their assessments. More importantly, we need to figure out if it's truly beneficial to remain an assessing entity, or if we should follow the route of the Village of Margaretville and give it up. Furthermore, the rolls for this coming fiscal year are based on the assessed values of the properties on March 1, 2011. How can we work with Middletown to have the assessed rolls in the current year instead of a year behind?

For the benefit of the taxpayers in Fleischmanns, I believe this is an important issue that should be addressed.

**Middletown Taxes**-About 1/3 of the taxes we pay to the Town of Middletown stays in Middletown (the rest go to the County). I started a conversation with our bookkeeper, Russell Schebesta, about how this money is being spent in Middletown and how the people of Fleischmanns benefit (or not) from this money. Russ has agreed to figure out how much Fleischmanns residents contribute to Middletown. It is my opinion that someone should speak to Middletown about how the money is spent, and how it can be used for more services in the Village.

As far as following up on the matters mentioned above or any new Village initiatives, I respectfully decline. However, I will continue to work with FEMA in getting the project worksheets written for the work that needs to be done in the Village.

Fred Woller has written, "Harriet and I have always been there to fight for you." This is now your opportunity.

I remain available for questions on the above matters. Feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Ben

Further discussion was held by the Board in efforts to resolve conflicts.

**Agenda**

Motion made by Todd Pascarella to adjourn. Motion seconded by Benjamin Fenton. Todd Pascrella-Aye. Benjamin Fenton-Aye. Harriet L. Grossman-Aye. Fred Woller-Aye. All in favor. Motion so carried.