Written by CAROL POMEDAY
Wednesday, 14 November 2012 17:02

Pay hikes approved for elected officials; 10% boost in water rate sought

Only Belgium village officials showed up for the budget hearing Monday.

The $1.05 million spending plan, which calls for a tax levy of $704,785, was unanimously approved without comment. The levy is the maximum allowed by state law and .67% higher than last year.

The budget includes a pay raise for the village president from $1,500 to $2,000 effective April 16. Meeting pay for elected officials was increased from $45 to $60 for board meetings and from $22.50 to $40 for committee meetings. Those rates will go into effective in April 2013 or 2014, depending upon when the trustee's term of office expires.

Meeting pay for salaried employees will be the same as for elected officials effective Jan. 1. Hourly employees receive pay for meetings they are asked to attend, which is rare, officials noted.

Trustees Ken Hirschmann and Vickie Boehnlein voted against the meeting pay increase for elected officials. At a previous meeting, both said the increase is too high given the economic times. Boehnlein supported the meeting pay change for employees, but Hirschmann also opposed that.

The pay for election inspectors was raised to $15 per hour for the chief inspector and $10 per hour for regular inspectors.

Residents will pay $107 for collection of garbage and recyclables by Veolia, a 3% increase. Garbage collection is a separate item on the tax bill. The village will pay the fuel surcharge imposed by the company.

In other matters, officials took the following action:

• The board recommended a 10% increase in the water rate and a 5% increase in the sewer rate. The Public Service Commission must approve the water rate increase, but the board has the power to set the sewer rate. Village Attorney Gerald Antoine will draft a resolution authorizing the new sewer rate for consideration at the board's Dec. 10 meeting.

• Officials learned a valve in one of the pistons of fire engine 762, which is 17 years old, became loose and caused a lot of damage. It will cost about $8,800 to repair the engine, Fire Chief Dan Birenbaum told the board.

"We will try to absorb some of it in our budget, but we can't absorb $8,800," he said.

The village pays 40% of the fire department's cost and the town pays 60%.

“I think that’s just something we will have to absorb,” Boehnlein said.

The department has two other fire engines and can depend on mutual aid from surrounding fire departments if needed, Birenbaum said.

• The board learned the Main Street sewer and water project is currently $150,000 under budget and will likely be at least $75,000 under budget when all bills are paid, according to Village Engineer Matt Greeley. The board decided to replace 13 old fire hydrants located throughout the village with new ones at a cost of $47,000 as a part of the project.

• A proposal from BlackDot to purchase lease rights on the water tower for $144,500 was rejected by the board. Birenbaum recommended that no more antennas be added to the tower. The new water tower is built to accommodate antennas, but it is farther from I-43 so companies prefer the old tower, he said.

• The village’s new website — www.village.belgium.wi.us — is up and running. Office assistant Sherri Erickson built and maintains the site.