

Town of Port budget calls for slight tax decrease

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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Small crowd of residents approve spending plan that trims assessed rate by one cent

A handful of Town of Port Washington voters on Monday approved a \$593,506 budget for 2013, an increase of about \$46,000 from this year.

The residents set the tax levy at \$448,000 — an increase of about \$500 — and the highway expenditures for 2013 at \$249,000.

The highway expenditures include \$50,000 from the town's fund balance, which will remain at about \$200,000 even after the withdrawal, officials said.

The town is considering reconstructing Green Bay Road next year and also plans to make repairs to the bike trail bridge, potentially bringing it down to grade.

Town Clerk Jenny Schlenvogt said she expects the tax rate to decrease by about one cent, to \$2.21 per \$1,000 assessed valuation.

The majority of the discussion was raised by resident Terry Anewenter, who questioned why Town Clerk Jenny Schlenvogt's pay is increasing from \$35,500 to \$42,000 next year.

In addition to her salary, those amounts include \$3,000 in per diem pay — \$50 for each meeting attended to a maximum 60 meetings.

"I don't see a lot of people getting raises the last two years," Anewenter said. "In this economy, I have a problem with this. They (salaries) should be frozen at their current rate."

The town should put any salary increase for any position to a referendum vote, he said.

The clerk was the only position recommended for a salary increase, Town Chairman Jim Melichar said, adding the pay raise reflects the increase in the clerk's workload.

The workload has caused many townships to hire full-time clerks, he added.

Although the clerk only has office hours two days a week, she handles town business on her cell phone and via e-mail throughout the week, Melichar added.

"You need to make it an attractive salary," Melichar said.

Schlenvogt noted the duties of the clerk have expanded through the years, adding she is currently completing her work to become a certified town clerk.

By a 6-2 vote, residents approved the salaries for town officials for the coming term, which runs from April 2013 to April 2015.

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The \$5.500 annual pay of \$8,000, pay, 50 cents, \$50 the new pay, and the \$5,000 in addition,